CHRISTOPHER SHIELDS

FRACTURED GOODNESS

Aristotle's Response to Plato's Form of the Good

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Dedicated, with gratitude, to
Gail Fine
ex solo ad solem

Contents

Acknowledgements xi
Preface xv

1. A View of a View of the Good 1
   - 1.1 A View of the Good 1
     - 1.1.1 The Form of the Good Is a Form 5
     - 1.1.2 The Form of the Good Admits of a Univocal Definition 6
     - 1.1.3 Goodness Is Something Common 8
     - 1.1.4 The Form of the Good Is Universal 9
     - 1.1.5 The Form of the Good Is a Paradigm 11
     - 1.1.6 The Form of the Good Is Separate 12
     - 1.1.7 Aristotle's Target 15
   - 1.2 Preliminary Distinctions and Initial Questions 17
   - 1.3 The Axiological Character of Aristotle's Complaint 23
   - 1.4 A View of a View of the Good: Aristotle's Reaction 28
     - 1.4.1 Preliminary Introduction 29
     - 1.4.2 No Forms over the Prior and Posterior 30
     - 1.4.3 Goods across the Categories 30
     - 1.4.4 The Diversity of the Sciences 31
     - 1.4.5 Adding 'Itself' 31
     - 1.4.6 Relative Praise for the Pythagoreans and Speusippus 31
     - 1.4.7 A Platonic Rejoinder Considered and Rejected 32
     - 1.4.8 A Conciliatory Concern 32
     - 1.4.9 Normative Considerations Reintroduced 33
   - 1.5 The Arguments of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 34
     - 1.5.1 A Series of Goods (ASG) (*EN* i 6, 1096a17–23) 34
     - 1.5.2 Goods Across the Categories (GAC) (*EN* i 6, 1096a23–29) 35
     - 1.5.3 The Diversity of the Sciences (DS) (*EN* i 6, 1096a29–34) 36
     - 1.5.4 Adding 'Itself' (AI) (*EN* i 6, 1096a34–1096b5) 36
     - 1.5.5 An Argument from the Plurality of Intrinsic Goods (IG) (*EN* i 6, 1096b8–26) 37
     - 1.5.6 The Pointlessness of the Form of the Good (PFG) (*EN* i 6, 1096b35–1097a13) 38
   - 1.6 Concluding Considerations 40

2. Two Views of a View of a View of the Good 42
   - 2.1 Two Classes? 42
   - 2.2 Seven Questions about Aristotle's Criticisms of the Form of the Good 43

2.3 The Reception of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 45
2.3.1 A Committed Byzantine Platonist: Eustratius 47
2.3.2 A Committed Medieval Aristotelian: Thomas Aquinas 54
2.3.3 The Debate Continues 60
2.4 Concluding Considerations 66

3. A Series of Goods 68
3.1 Goods, in Order 68
3.2 A Complicated Simple Argument 69
3.3 Series: Before and After 75
3.4 Conjectural Expansions 80
3.5 Concluding Considerations 89

4. Goodness across the Categories 90
4.1 The Arguments: One Dominant and One Ancillary 90
4.2 Goodness across the Categories: Predicational Approaches 92
4.3 Goodness across the Categories: Non-predicational Approaches 103
4.4 Geach's Gambit 107
4.5 Goodness and Being: The Covariance Contention 113
4.6 Concluding Considerations 117

5. The Diversity of Sciences 118
5.1 An Axiological Dimension 119
5.2 The Requisites of Science 121
5.3 A Taxonomical Cul-de-Sac 125
5.4 Intra-categorial Non-univocity 130
5.5 Fractured Goodness Fractured 137
5.6 Concluding Considerations 138

6. Adding 'Itself' 140
6.1 A Simple Transformation? 140
6.2 An Intrinsicality Filter 142
6.3 Intrinsicality Filtering and Platonic Paradeigmatism 146
6.4 A Rejoinder from Eustratius 154
6.5 Concluding Considerations 157

7. Intrinsic Goods Alone: A Platonic Rejoinder 159
7.1 Goodness Is Meant in Two Ways 159
7.2 An Ungainly Dilemma 162
7.3 Fractured Goodness Fractured 165
7.4 Concluding Considerations 172

8. Normative Considerations Reintroduced 174
8.1 A Return to the Normative 174
8.2 A Paradigm to Nowhere 177
8.3 Three Developments of Aristotle's Brief against Paradeigmatism 182
8.4 Concluding Considerations 192

9. Good, Bad, Better, Worse 195
9.1 A Tension in Aristotle 196
9.2 Two Ways Out 208
9.3 Goodness as Cause: A Rapprochement 217
9.4 The Core of Goodness 223
9.5 Concluding Considerations 226

10. Goodness qua Goodness: a Concluding Scientific Postscript? 228
10.1 A Science of Goodness? 228
10.2 The Case against a Science of Goodness 231
10.3 A Model for Goodness qua Goodness 233
10.4 The Model Applied 238
10.5 Systematicity and Value Coordination Reconsidered 254
10.6 Concluding Considerations 259

Bibliography 261
Index 273

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Preface

Aristotle rejects Plato's Theory of Forms. His complaints are many and varied, and they have appropriately been subjected to scrutiny and critical assessment from antiquity down to the present day. He contends inter alia: (i) that Forms are causally inert and so cannot explain change or generation (*Met*. A 9, 991a8, Z 8, 1033b26–28, M 5, 1079b15–19); (ii) that postulating Forms offends theoretical economy (*Met*. A 9, 990a34–b5, M 4, 1078b34–1079a1); (iii) that Forms, if ever they existed, would be epistemically otiose (*Met*. A 9, 991a12–16, M 5, 1079b15–19); (iv) that introducing Forms as paradigms is empty metaphor (*Met*. A 9, 991a20–25, M 5, 1079b24–28); (v) that Forms cannot be essences if they are separated, since essences are intrinsic features of things (*Met*. A 9, 991b1–9, M 5, 1079b35–1080a8); (vi) that in general, Forms, once separated, contribute nothing to particulars (*Met*. A 9, 991a8–11, M 5, 1079b12–15). At his most caustic, he says, 'Let the Forms be gone—they are gibberish, and even if they do exist they are wholly irrelevant' (*Apo*. I 22, 83a32–34).

Having rejected the Theory of Forms on these grounds and others as well, Aristotle might legitimately lay down his pen and go about theorizing in his preferred metaphysical framework in those areas of philosophy in which the existence of Forms is not especially at issue. Yet he does not: he reserves a special set of criticisms for one Form, the Form of the Good, paying it considerable attention in both the *Nicomachean* and the *Eudemian Ethics*. In both works, he devotes an entire chapter (by modern divisions) to the Form of the Good, subjecting it to two sets of criticisms, which, though parallel, do not overlap completely. Some of the concerns he voices about the Form of the Good in these chapters derive from his complaints about all Forms, taken as a class; others seem peculiar, with a special focus on the Form of the Good alone; and still others seem in a way hybrid, both general and peculiar, in that they develop general themes in peculiar detail which seem pertinent only where the Form of the Good is concerned.

One such hybrid criticism, in its way both general and peculiar, pertains to the status of the Form of the Good as a paradigm (*παράδειγμα*). According to Aristotle, as per (iv) above, postulating Forms as paradigms is empty metaphor and hollow pretence; the claim that Forms are paradigms lacks appreciable content, he implies, until it is unpacked and rendered literal. Without such specification, then, Platonic paradeigmatism should hardly repay sober evaluation. Yet when he turns his attention to the Form of the Good, Aristotle makes a special effort to discredit its status as a paradigm, contending that it is not fit for purpose, that no one concerned with doing good or acting well will ever—could ever—pay it any heed.

One can imagine any number of reasons for the special attention Aristotle pays the Form of the Good in these ethical works. One might think first, and most obviously, that the Form of the Good, if it exists at all, ought to play a central, regulative role in ethical theorizing. As conceived by both Plato and Aristotle, whenever we undertake to investigate ethical questions, we need to address ourselves to questions concerning how we ought to live and to act, and, more generally, to questions concerning how we might become the sorts of persons we should wish to be (*EN* i 4, 1095a5, ii 2, 1103b27–30; x 7, 1179a33–1179b4).

Plato surely shows himself concerned with these sorts of issues, if in different ways and from different angles from those in which Aristotle shows similar concerns. In his normal way of proceeding, Plato suggests that if we want to learn how we ought to conduct ourselves when we wish to become φ (for instance, courageous or just or pious or, generally, virtuous), we really ought to have more than a rough and ready idea of what being-φ involves; given the importance of our aspirations in these regards, we should seek secure, accurate understandings of the virtues we aspire to attain. We say that we want to become just, and if we are serious in expressing our hopes and intentions in this regard, Plato implies, we ought to have a firm idea of what justice is, lest we end up befuddled Euthyphros, asserting with confidence that we are people with features we cannot so much as characterize coherently, claiming that we are pious or courageous or just, all the while hardly knowing what it means to be pious or courageous or just, or, more generally what piety is, or what courage is, or what justice is. Generalizing on this Platonic posture, it follows that if we say that we wish to be good, to do good things, to lead good lives, then we should, again on Plato's way of proceeding, look to the Form of the Good for guidance—on the assumption, of course, that there is a Form of the Good.

Aristotle denies there is any such Form, first because, as it happens, there are no Forms at all. He does not let the matter rest there, however. We know that Aristotle credits Socrates with the search for definitions and that he indeed gives him high marks for undertaking this sort of enquiry (*Met*. M 4, 1078b17–19, b22–30). Plato rightly follows Socrates but then goes astray, Aristotle tells us, when he *separates* the Forms, making them transcendent, in the sense that they exist without being immanent in any concrete object or in the individual actions of any individual human or in any particular societal arrangement (*Met*. M 4, 1078b30–34). So, perhaps, as far as this criticism from Aristotle is concerned, there is yet some form of goodness, now written in lower case so as to indicate a shared, immanent property, rather than a transcendent Form capable of existing without being instantiated. Indeed, his praise of Socrates would seem to indicate that he is at least open to this possibility: perhaps there is yet some single definition of goodness of the sort sought by Socrates, some goodness which is immanent, to be sure, but yet goodness, a single, definable goodness, not transcendent

in the manner of Plato's postulated Form of the Good, but a form of goodness all the same, a goodness shared by all good things.

This possibility Aristotle equally denies: there is no common property *being good* predicated of all and only good things. This distinguishes goodness from other sorts of characteristics; there is, for instance, in Aristotle's view, a common property *being human*, predicated of all and only human beings. There is for this reason also a second, subtler, and more important reason why—as I show in these pages—Aristotle thinks that we should pay special attention to the Form of the Good: when we generalize from specific virtues, such as piety or courage or justice, to goodness itself, we wrongly carry forward a presumption which, even if defensible in some special cases, becomes wholly indefensible in the general case. This is Plato's *univocity assumption*, which we find, upon a close examination of his discussion of the Form of the Good, Aristotle regards as utterly unwarranted where goodness is concerned.

To illustrate more concretely, suppose we are Platonists and, following the lead of Socrates, we take ourselves to have uncovered univocal definitions of various virtues—that justice $=_{df} \varphi$, that courage $=_{df} \Psi$, and so on. We might reasonably, then, having secured univocal definitions in these cases, attempt on this basis to proceed to the more general case of goodness, supposing that a univocal account might be in the offing here too, that just as we have learnt that 'justice $=_{df} \varphi$' and that 'courage $=_{df} \Psi$', so too we might learn that 'goodness $=_{df} \Omega$'. This move, one might contend, simply parallels Aristotle's own move from the essence-specifying definitions of various animals—dogs and humans and snakes—to the univocal definition of the genus *animal*.

Aristotle disagrees. He contends that we would be mistaken to push univocity to this higher level of generality for the case of goodness. To begin, the target of his criticism, Plato, has given us no reason to suppose that the various virtues are related to general goodness as species to genus. Moreover, one might reasonably resist this sort of generalization in any number of different ways. First among them: even if we are prepared to admit univocity for some virtues—as Aristotle himself seems to be at least in some cases (for courage, it seems), even while denying it in others (justice, for instance)—we might yet suppose that goodness presents special difficulties where univocity is concerned. One might simply argue that there is no value for Ω in the schema 'goodness $=_{df} \Omega$', because goodness is simple and therefore altogether indefinable.

This is not, however, Aristotle's dominant contention. Rather, he takes up a second strategy, arguing that goodness is positively non-univocal, because *what goodness is* varies across different applications of the predicate '. . . is good'. It differs, he avers, as applied to different subjects, or as applied in different contexts, or even, as we shall see, more abstractly, as applied across different categories of being.

This, at any rate, is the general purport of his arguments against the Form of the Good in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6. He denies that goodness is 'something common, universal, and one' (*κοινόν τι καθόλου καὶ ἕν*, *EN* i 6, 1096a28; cf. *EE* i 8, 1217b33–35), and he marshals a series of arguments intended to support this denial.

These arguments have divided Aristotle's readers from antiquity down to the present day. They have, in fact, not only divided them, but divided them rather starkly: some find his arguments completely compelling, decisive where the Form of the Good is concerned, while others arrive at precisely the opposite assessment, finding them pretty well hopeless, even to the point of their proving to be an embarrassment for Aristotle. What is more, Aristotle's commentators seem to be in disarray in more than their predictably diverse evaluative conclusions: beyond diverging over whether his arguments are any good, they disagree about what his arguments actually are—what they aim to prove, about how their premisses are to be understood, about how they are related to one another, and even about how many arguments the texts presenting them contain. The situation seems dire, even relative to the typically diverse hermeneutical and critical reactions to Aristotle's most central texts.

For those wishing to know them and evaluate them fairly, then, it seems best to begin, so far as possible, without any preconceptions about their eventual success or failure. One should be alive to the possibility that they completely wreck Plato's metaphysics of goodness; but one should by the same token allow for the possibility that they miss their mark altogether, such that a neutral reader, someone who might or might not otherwise find herself sympathetic to Plato's approach to goodness, should come to regard them as feeble, as impotent where the Form of the Good is concerned.

In fact, as we shall see, the truth lies between these extremes: the arguments are without exception forceful, which is not to say, however, that they are without exception decisive. On the contrary, one can in each case imagine an advocate of Plato pressing back against Aristotle's arguments, attempting to mute them, and in some cases to good effect. One can equally imagine, even if it is less likely to occur, partisan campaigners laying down their weapons and moving forward in a non-doctrinaire spirit of shared dialectic.

So far, however, as a history of the transmission of the reception of Aristotle's arguments demonstrates, the overwhelming tendency among Aristotle's readers has been markedly bimodal: commentators emerge from their engagements with Aristotle's arguments either persuaded by the power of his case against Plato's Form of the Good or aghast at the feebleness of his attempt to upend one of his teacher's most cherished commitments. The result, then, is all too often stalemate: neither side, in any historical period, has completely dominated; and very often, though not always, Aristotle's expositors have crossed each other as military ships

in the dark of night, barely taking note of the claims advanced by their foes. Certainly, in any event, no dominant consensus has emerged as to the final worth of Aristotle's critical axiology.

One way to proceed against the backdrop of this somewhat distressing state of play, a way embraced in this study, is to state Aristotle's arguments in their closest, textually anointed formulations—a non-trivial matter, as will emerge—and then to stress test them, in an effort to discover their mettle and so to uncover where, if anywhere, they fall short, and then also, if they do fall short, to determine how Aristotle or some proponent of his point of view might seek to shore them up.

Proceeding this way has at least one modest advantage. Too often Aristotle's arguments about the Form of the Good are set forth by his expositors with a purely eristic intent, one side striving to bolster Aristotle and vanquish Plato and the other striving to refute Aristotle and exonerate Plato. Both sides miss something when they presume in advance that there is a clear winner in an eristic contest concerning the existence and character of the Form of the Good. It emerges that if we set Aristotle's arguments forth neutrally and with no preconceptions as to their eventual merit, we find that they are formidable, but not therefore unanswerable; they are suggestive in their brevity, but are, again, for that very reason not (or not yet) decisive—if, that is, their primary conclusion is, as suggested, that goodness is non-univocal. Even that suggestion, however, is controversial, and its defence requires a careful unpacking and reconstruction of Aristotle's text.

This approach may seem unappealing, at least to those for whom philosophy is a dialectical blood sport. Perhaps, though, one should neither over- nor underrate the conclusion that Aristotle's arguments are formidable but not therefore decisive refutations of Plato's Form of the Good. If this conclusion seems guarded, it is worth noting that it is already controversial in the agonistic arena, where partisan views dominate. Moreover, it does not entail or imply that the arguments are pointless, nor even that when suitably developed they will forever fail to make their mark. On the contrary, the arguments are worth studying in detail precisely because they raise important and difficult concerns about the univocity of goodness.

That they remain controversial down to the present day is hardly surprising: axiology has never left us as an area of philosophic investigation and its issues remain hotly contested today—a circumstance which tends to suggest that the exchange between Plato and Aristotle on the nature of goodness touches a deep nerve in value theory, one that continues to repay careful consideration. One advantage of pursuing these issues in the context of the dialectic between Plato and Aristotle, then, derives from the fact that each philosopher proceeds against the backdrop of an articulated metaphysics, one that provides context and support, both direct and indirect, for the disagreements between them. This contrasts with much of the present-day investigation into these topics, which proceeds by and large without the benefit of any metaphysical framework or category theory

in which to articulate them. Discussions today instead proceed almost exclusively by appeal to intuitions elicited by various thought experiments and make-believe examples. Now, there is something of value to be gained by proceeding in this way; but there are also some ingrained limitations to conducting axiology unmoored to any overarching metaphysical framework. Here, despite their manifest metaphysical disagreements, both Plato's and Aristotle's ontologies serve as clarifying touchstones. Moreover, and more productively, Aristotle's categorialism brings precision to issues that are too often today left nebulous.

Be that as it may, there is a further, striking reason why arguments of the form Aristotle develops and deploys remain topics of lively concern, and it is a reason that derives from a problem of which Aristotle shows himself to be keenly aware. On the supposition that the arguments of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 are wholly successful, then they are also wholly destructive. What then? If we agree that goodness is non-univocal, then we may find ourselves in a position—we may find ourselves forced into a position—where we are constrained to deny the commensurability of value, such that when presented with two valuable but practically incompatible courses of action we are rendered incapable of choosing between them, or, at any rate, incapable of choosing between them on the basis of any rationally defensible normative principle.

More precisely, suppose, as Aristotle contends and Plato denies, that goodness is non-univocal. This gives rise to the following tension. We may find ourselves in a situation where two practically incompatible courses of actions, a^1 and a^2, are both in our judgement valuable and so worthy of pursuit. If we wish to pursue one of them, but cannot pursue both, we are then asked to choose between a^1 and a^2; but if we judge the values of a^1 and a^2 to be incommensurable, at least in the sense that they cannot be brought into any ordinal ranking such that a^1 is better than a^2, a^2 is better than a^1, or that a^1 and a^2 are equally valuable (in which case there is no value-driven choice between them), then we seem left without any rational basis for preferring one course of action to the other. This may not seem to matter if we are deciding between *îles flottantes* and *crème brûlée* for dessert this evening. Yet it will matter greatly if we are trying to decide whether we should become stockbrokers or take holy orders after graduating, or, again, whether we should become jurists, so that we can augment the justice of the world, or concertizing cellists, so that we can augment the beauty of the world. If beauty and justice are incommensurable with respect to their goodness, then it appears, initially at least, that there is no ready sense to be given to the question of whether one course of action is better than the other. For to be better seems to mean only this: to be *more good*.

While this may be the state of affairs in which we in fact find ourselves, living in a world of irreducible value pluralism, the threat of non-commensurability of value quite rightly concerns Aristotle, just as it should concern us. He asks, in the

midst of his refutation of Plato, how, on the assumption that goodness is non-univocal, we ought to construe the relations of various good things to one another (*EN* i 6, 1096b26), expressing the completely reasonable sentiment that even if non-univocal, good things do not seem utterly unconnected to one another from the standpoint of their goodness. This seems an appropriate question for him to pose to himself and an entirely reasonable concern for him to voice. If he denies Platonic univocity, then Aristotle accepts the thesis that there is no value superordinate to all other values. In accepting this thesis, he may also seem to accept a thesis that good things, like justice and beauty, are simply incommensurable, in the sense specified.

That, though, is already a bit too quick. In the eventuality that Aristotle rejects the univocity of goodness, some values may yet be commensurable in a domain-specific sort of way. Allowing that, however, takes us only part of the way. For in some cases, at least, we seem presented with cross-domain choices—whether, for instance, we should prefer to augment the justice or the beauty of the world, when we recognize that we cannot do both simultaneously. If both justice and beauty are good, but their forms of goodness are incommensurable with one another, then questions concerning which course of action—the course of augmenting justice or augmenting beauty—is all-things-considered the better course to pursue seem forever beyond our reach, and not merely for epistemic reasons. Or, again, if we think that ethics proceeds wholly in the domain of the good *for human beings*, then we might yet ask how the welfare of non-human animals, or of ecosystems, should figure into our deliberative processes. In the absence of cross-domain values, it becomes challenging to know how we might weigh competing goods, or indeed, worse, how disparate goods indexed to discrete domains might be regarded as competing in the first place.

Aristotle's rejection of univocity for the case of goodness thus reasonably bids him to enquire, in more than one passage, whether non-univocity presents a problem for his own axiology. That is, on the assumption that his arguments for non-univocity succeed, a pressing question naturally arises for Aristotle—a question, again, that he himself rightly and understandably poses and pursues: what is the relation between the goodnesses of the various non-univocally good things?

His answers to this question are sketchy and incomplete, but still in their way incredibly rich.

His normal manner of addressing these sorts of issues outside of his anti-Platonic polemicizing provides a promising framework for dealing with the non-univocity of goodness, an approach which arguably avoids any form of unwanted incommensurability. This framework might be specified by developing a science directly parallel to his developed science of being qua being, namely a science of goodness qua goodness. As his seasoned readers will be aware, Aristotle in one passage denies that there are genera of either being or goodness, and asserts on

this basis that neither is there a science of either (*EE* i 8, 1217b33–35). Yet he elsewhere announces and develops a detailed science of being qua being (*Met*. *Γ* 1, 1003a20–21), a science he yokes instructively to the existence of a kind of homonymy of being, core-dependent homonymy (*Met*. *Γ* 2, 1003a33–1003b12), according to which all beings are beings insofar as there are related in a systematic way to a categorially core kind of being, or perhaps, even, ultimately, to a categorially core individual being. The suggestion thus lies near that a similar path remains open for goodness, or, rather, for a science of goodness qua goodness.

1
A View of a View of the Good

1.1 A View of the Good

Upon reaching maturity those schooled to rule in Plato's ideal city, Kallipolis, are afforded a view of the Good:

> Then, at the age of fifty, those who have survived, who have excelled in all matters and manners, in both their deeds and their studies, are to be led to their immediate goal; and they are to be compelled (*ἀναγκαστέον*) to throw open the soul's shimmering eye, to focus on that very thing which provides light to all, and once they have seen the Good itself, to use it as their paradigm when ordering the city, the citizens, and themselves (*Rep*. vii 540a4–9).

Curiously, Plato suggests that those guardians who have survived the rigours of training require compulsion to complete their labours: they are to be compelled to cast open the eyes of their souls to behold the visage of the Good.[1] When they do so, when the guardians arrive at their moment of apprehension, they come to know the Good, the 'last thing learnt and hardly ever seen' (*Rep*. vi 505a2–4). Their journey upward then culminates, as depicted by Plato in highly charged language, in an unmediated perceptual, or quasi-perceptual,[2] *de re* apprehension of the Good itself, which perception in turn furnishes the guardians with the knowledge required to bring order to the city, to its citizens, and to themselves.

[1] One might also translate 'they are to be compelled' (*ἀναγκαστέον*) as 'one must lead them…' or 'one must compel them…' Presumably those doing the compelling here are the founders (*οἰκισταί*) of the city (*Rep*. ii 379a1, vii 519c8). The language of compulsion here has three exact parallels in Plato (*Laws* 965c9; *Rep*. ii 378d2, and iv 421b9; cf. *Rep*. vii 519c5–d2) as well as one close parallel (*Rep*. vii 539e4). The close parallel pertains to the more understandable compulsion required for guardians to return to the cave.

On pre-visage compulsion, see Wagner (2005) and Shields (2007). There is a puzzle as to why well-trained guardians should require compulsion at this juncture. Wagner (2005, 101) hypothesizes 'that compulsion is needed, despite the apparent oddness of this mandate, to countermand the possible misguided attempts of *thumoeides* to control the soul through the mechanism of its felt fear and shame'. Shields (2007) offers an alternative but complementary account.

[2] Plato speaks of the guardians as 'having seen' (*ἰδόντας*; *Rep*. vii 540a8) the Good. Presumably the verb is here used in the sense of what grammarians call the 'intellectual use' of perceptual verbs. Hence, 'quasi-perceptual'. The force of such language seems at once very familiar and rather elusive.

The Form of the Good[3] is uniquely suited to equip them for these tasks in view of its very nature: it serves as a *paradigm* (παράδειγμα; *Rep*. vii 540a9) for those seeking to inculcate the orderly goodness of personal and political harmony into the individual soul and its civic isomorph, Kallipolis.

Not much about this depiction is beyond dispute, and, indeed, the minimal description just tendered is already hotly contested.[4] For present purposes, however, it will not be remiss to be modestly peremptory in setting out a crisp understanding of those features of Plato's Form of the Good most relevant to our assessment of Aristotle's criticisms of it;[5] doing so will have at least the advantage of purchasing clarity for our assessment of Aristotle's critical posture. We will in any case revisit some of these formulations as we move further into our discussion of Aristotle's reactions to them.

Our ultimate goal is to understand Aristotle's criticisms of Plato's Form of the Good and to sketch his own conception of the good in light of them. To do so with any hope of success, we must keep two questions sharply delineated, even if, in practice, they are intricately intertwining. First, what is Plato's metaphysics of goodness? Second, how does Aristotle understand Plato's metaphysics of goodness—if, that is, he understands it at all?[6] These questions tend to meld into one another in practice, not least for the inescapable reason that some of our best evidence for Plato's conception of the Form of the Good comes from Aristotle himself, including primarily from passages in which he lobs critical appraisals in Plato's direction.

Despite the polemical context in which this evidence about Plato's conception of goodness emerges, one may nonetheless seek to determine whether Aristotle's portrayal of Plato is fair and accurate; one may then also ask whether, if his depictions are on the mark, his criticisms have the force he intends for them. Before

[3] So far as possible, 'Form' is written with an uppercase 'F' to refer to Platonic Forms, including instances in which Aristotle is characterizing Plato's Forms; 'forms' is written with a lower-case 'f' when Aristotelian forms are in view. This practice is meant to reflect the fact that although both 'Forms' and 'forms' are technical terms, they differ in many ways, some of the most central of which are characterized in this chapter. The same holds for 'the Good', where this refers to Plato's Form of the Good and 'the good' where this captures Aristotle's notion of the good. It is not always clear in Aristotle's uses whether in speaking of 'the good' he intends an unqualified notion of goodness or a circumscribed notion, such as the good for human beings. On the distinction between absolute and circumscribed notions of goodness, see § 1.2, with ns. 46 and 47.

[4] See Fine (2003, 1–43) for a thorough presentation of the ways in which characterizations of Plato's Forms may be contested.

[5] We proceed first with a statement of the arguments, collected together in the order they appear in Aristotle's text, and then explore each in turn minutely in the chapters to follow.

[6] To say that he understands it, or even that he misunderstands it, already presupposes that he engages it. Even this latter thesis is controversial; some think his primary critical discussions take aim not at Plato himself, but rather some other Academic. This is the view of Stewart (1892, vol. 1). Krohn (1876, 187) holds by implication that Aristotle misunderstood the doctrine of the good in the *Republic*: 'Der Einzige, der die spätere Phase der platonischen Staates wirklich verstanden hat, war Plotin'. More direct is Burnet (1928, 56): 'In the first place, it is certain that he [*scil.* Aristotle] never understood the teaching of the head of the Academy'.

going too far in this direction, however, it is worth observing that it is even possible to doubt that Aristotle's primary target is Plato himself; some think that Aristotle's target is not Plato but rather some other Academic.[7] One reason some have supposed that Aristotle's target cannot be Plato derives from a determination which is for us, at this point, still very far downstream, namely the contention that *if* they were understood as directed against Plato, Aristotle's arguments would be so very terrible that a charitable reader should avoid making any such assumption about them. Better, then, these readers suppose, to understand Aristotle's arguments as directed against the view of a lesser Academic.[8] Since we have not made this determination, and will in fact never come anywhere close to it after we have reviewed the arguments in detail, despite our raising some significant questions and problems for them, we lack this particular motive for denying that Aristotle has Plato's position in view—allowing, however, that there may be other reasons for raising questions about Aristotle's intended target.

For now, though, those who doubt that Aristotle's target is Plato himself may prefer to speak simply of a 'Platonic' view of the Good, whereby what is meant is not Plato's own view of the Good but rather a view conforming to Plato's view, perhaps deriving from Plato's Academy, or perhaps not, in which case those so inclined may take the label 'Platonic' more loosely still, as a view merely akin to Plato's view of the Good, in the way that someone might describe Husserl's conception of the ego as 'Cartesian' or Rawlsian constructivism as 'Kantian'.[9]

Taking all that together, then, we have a nexus of interlocking questions about the features of the view Aristotle assails, the proponent or proponents of that view, the accuracy of Aristotle's depictions, and the ultimate value of his criticisms—whether or not they aim at, or hit, a position espoused by Plato himself. It will turn out that none of these questions admits of a simple answer. Even so, by attending minutely to Aristotle's representation of the view of goodness he offers for critical scrutiny, primarily in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 and, to a lesser extent, in *Eudemian Ethics* i 8, we can develop a fair picture of both the view he depicts and his reasons for regarding it as severally problematic; we may also then turn to the rather less doxographically encumbered question of whether Aristotle's

[7] So, e.g. Stewart (1892, vol. 1).

[8] Again, this is the view of Stewart (1892, vol. 1). See also n. 12.

[9] We may speak this way without violence even though it is clear that Husserl himself wishes to be more circumspect (1960, 1): 'France's greatest thinker, René Descartes, gave transcendental phenomenology new impulses through his *Meditations*; their study acted quite directly on the transformation of an already developing phenomenology into a new kind of transcendental philosophy. Accordingly, one might almost call transcendental phenomenology a neo-Cartesianism, even though it is obliged—and precisely by its radical development of Cartesian motifs—to reject nearly all the well-known doctrinal content of the Cartesian philosophy'. It should be noted, however, that those adopting the expedient need not go quite so far as Robin (1908, 7) who, in a magisterial study, allows that the Platonism in his view is neither more nor less than a Platonism-as-Aristotle-conceives-Platonism.

critical posture is justified, as considered against his own clearly stated characterization of the view he undertakes to reject, whatever its provenance.

Critical opinion on this latter question is sharply divided, in some ways almost comically so: some find Aristotle's criticisms utterly devastating, even to the point of liberating us all from an oppressively Platonic approach to the metaphysics of goodness; others find them utterly pathetic—so much so that they are incredulous that Aristotle, superior philosopher that he indubitably was, could expect us to take them at all seriously; still others, unsure of what to make of them, are simply mystified by the entire affair.[10]

Matters are further coloured and complicated by the fact that some of Aristotle's readers are antecedently either sympathetic or hostile to Plato's metaphysics of goodness, and are accordingly disposed to be either on guard against or receptive to his critical assaults. Here too, then, scholars approach Aristotle's arguments already disposed to read them in one way rather than another.

We may begin by characterizing the *Platonic view of the Good*.[11] Let this be understood as a view rooted in Plato's texts but also as one which equally reflects the sorts of theses Aristotle ascribes both explicitly and implicitly to the view he reports as embraced by his 'friends' in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 (φιλοῖ; *EN* i 6 1096a13; cf. ix 12, 1172a5). As we have already noted, whether his chief friend among these friends is Plato is a matter of some dispute,[12] but it should be conceded by all that the view of the Good he considers surely has an Academic provenance and at the very least has a strong overlap with Plato's own express view of the Good. Accordingly, a first approach to Aristotle's critical

[10] We recount some representative critical reactions in chapter 2.

[11] Santas (1989, 157) rightly observes: '…discussions of Aristotle's critique have suffered from the fact that they do not juxtapose that critique against an intelligible reconstruction of Plato's theory'. What follows addresses this entirely reasonable concern. The data for these ascriptions, as provided, derive primarily from two sources: (i) passages within the Platonic dialogues and, more problematically, (ii) characterizations of Plato's Forms offered by Aristotle. The latter are more problematic inasmuch as many of Aristotle's discussions are mainly critical in character. It does not follow from their being critical, however, that they are inaccurate, intentionally or non-intentionally so. See Shields (2006) for an appraisal of Aristotle's worth as a source of data about Platonic philosophy. As noted already, however, the matter is especially complex in the current context, when we distinguish the overlapping questions concerning Plato's view of the Form of the Good and Aristotle's understanding and presentation of Plato's view of the Form of the Good.

[12] For this reason among others, it is probably safe to assume with Hardie (1980, 47–48) that Plato is in fact the intended target of Aristotle's arguments: 'Aristotle professes reluctance to attack it because "the Forms were brought in by our friends"; but a philosopher must prefer truth to friendship even if he has to destroy the tenets of his own school' (1096 a11–17). Plato is not mentioned here. But the theory of Forms is ascribed to Plato in the *Metaphysics* (987 a29 ff.). Some of the arguments used in the chapter are used elsewhere in contexts where Plato is named or is clearly intended. The *Republic* teaches that 'the Form of the Good has a unique status'. Again, however, one may comfortably retreat, when assessing Aristotle's arguments, to 'the Platonic View of the Good', as did, for instance, Robin (1908, 7) in a distinct but analogous context.

discussion of the Good reasonably accords Plato's metaphysics of goodness pride of place.[13]

If our goal is to understand and assess Aristotle's criticisms of the Platonic view of the Good, we may reasonably focus on those features of the view which are most salient for him. These are six: (i) the Form of the Good is a Form; (ii) the Form of the Good is univocal; (iii) Goodness is something common (*κοινόν*); (iv) the Form of the Good is universal (*καθόλου*); (v) the Form of the Good is a paradigm (*παράδειγμα*); and (vi) the Form of the Good is separate (*χωριστόν*). Some of these traits are reasonably straightforward, while others are a bit obscure; none of them is uncontroversially correct as a characterization of Plato's view; all of them demand at least some preliminary explication. For present purposes, we may present them briefly, explaining what each means and indicating why each has at least a claim to being authentically Platonic, without trying to establish this conclusion as beyond doubt. These theses are offered not as constituting a complete, stand-alone characterization of Plato's Form of the Good, but rather as a presentation of those features which seem most salient to Aristotle, as attested by the fact that these are the features that come to the fore in his criticisms of the Platonic View.

1.1.1 The Form of the Good Is a Form

This first contention may seem beyond reproach, but there is in fact a long and perfectly credible tradition of denying that Plato regarded the Form of the Good as a Form.[14] Much of this tradition stems from Plato's enigmatic contention that 'the Good is not being, but is yet further than being, surpassing it in dignity and power' (*οὐκ οὐσίας ὄντος τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, ἀλλ' ἔτι ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας πρεσβείᾳ καὶ δυνάμει ὑπερέχοντος*; *Rep.* vi 509b5–8). A careful analysis of this sentence,

[13] What follows is not an exhaustive account of Plato's account of the Form of the Good, but instead highlights those features most of concern to Aristotle. For a fuller, but still not exhaustive characterization, see Shields (2008) and also Santas (1989). Summarizing the attitude accepted in what follows as an assumption to be discharged: Aristotle's critical appraisal of Plato's theory of Forms is consistent with his providing neutral, independent data about the content of Plato's positions, even where explicit textual confirmation is lacking; (ii) a sufficient number of his characterizations are corroborated directly or indirectly by Plato's dialogues that we have reason to take his testimony seriously; and yet (iii) given that he freely characterizes Plato's views using diction reflecting his own explanatory framework which is at times, if not alien to Plato's approach, then certainly not shared by him, it serves to step lightly when evaluating those of Plato's commitments specified in Aristotle's preferred technical terminology. This is especially true where being universal (*καθόλου*) and being separate (*χωριστόν*) are concerned; see the discussion with notes to §§ 1.1.4 and 1.1.6.

[14] See Krohn (1876), Joseph (1948), and, in a different way, Irwin (1995), and Fine (2003). One might think of the Form of the Good, for instance, simply as the totality of all Forms, or as a teleological organizing principle of all Forms or a mere condition of the existence of Forms, and so forth. See also Denyer (2007), Santas (1980) and (1989), and Silverman (2002). For a critical assessment, see Shields (2008).

however, shows that it does not require the no-Form view of the Form of the Good; moreover, understanding it in its context shows more completely that it would be a mistake to try to understand it in that way.[15]

Rather, the Form of the Good is, on the contrary, one Form alongside other Forms, and so admits of whatever ontological characterization all Forms have.

That is to say, then, that the Form of the Good has the attributes that Forms have *as Forms*—let us call these its *ideal attributes*—and then the Form of the Good, again like any other Form, will have additionally any attributes it may have in virtue of being the particular Form it is—let us call these its *peculiar attributes*. To illustrate, helping ourselves to a broad range of Forms for the purposes of exposition, the Form of Justice has the ideal attribute of being a *paradigm*, which trait it has in common with all other Forms, but it also has the peculiar attribute of being a virtue Form, which attribute it has in common with some other Forms, Courage and Temperance, for instance, but not others, the Form of Equality or the Form of Largeness, for instance. Ideal attributes, then, comprise all and only those attributes Forms have in virtue of being Forms; the peculiar attributes of individual Forms may or may not be shared with some other Forms, but will derive not from their status as Forms, but rather from their own individual intrinsic natures.[16]

1.1.2 The Form of the Good Admits of a Univocal Definition

The Form of the Good has as one ideal attribute *univocity*, which is to say that it admits of a complete, single, specification. More precisely:

- a predicate φ is univocal as applied to x and y $=_{df}$ (i) x is φ and y is φ, and (ii) there exists a single, non-disjunctive, essence-specifying account of φ, as applied to x and y.[17]

So, for instance, the predicate *being water* is univocal, since:

[15] See Shields (2008).

[16] This distinction tracks the perspicuous distinction between ideal and proper attributes of Forms drawn in Keyt (1969), which rightly finds it first introduced in Aristotle's *Topics* 137b3–13. Cf. Cherniss (1962, 1–3).

[17] Some care is needed here in speaking of a 'predicate' in this connection, since this is sometimes taken to suggest that the definitions in question will be lexical or otherwise linguistic. They are not. Rather, they will be essence-specifying. Because the word 'predicate' is hopelessly ambiguous, as between signifying a linguistic item (as in: 'is red' is the predicate in the sentence 'Her gown is red.') and a non-linguistic item (as in: 'rationality is predicated of women and men indifferently'), where the non-linguistic item is a quality or property expressed by the linguistic item, we must simply heed the context to know what is meant by the term. Neither Plato nor Aristotle expends a great deal of effort drawing this sort of distinction, but pretty clearly use both notions in different contexts. What is important for our purposes, however, is that in speaking of predicates in connection with univocity, we are speaking of them non-linguistically rather than linguistically or lexically.

- water $=_{df} H_2O$.

The *definiens*, on the right sight of this formulation, specifies the nature of water, and does so non-disjunctively.[18] If someone were to create a clear potable liquid which was indistinguishable from water in all its macro properties, even to a fairly deep level of inspection (it is clear, boils at 100° C, freezes at 0° C, and so forth), but which had a completely different chemical structure revealed only upon analysis, say, *xyz*, then this stuff would not be water—not, at any rate, if this essence-specifying account of water is correct.[19] Nor would one create by fiat an essence-specifying account of water which incorporates this stuff simply by appending a disjunct: water $=_{df}$ (i) H_2O or (ii) *xyz*. Here we may notice one problem among others with a disjunctive definition in this context: it either implicitly closes off the addition of further disjuncts by fiat, in which case one needs an account showing why this is so, or it is implicitly open, so that the definition in effect reads: water $=_{df}$ (i) H_2O or (ii) *xyz* or (iii)…, in which case the definition is incomplete and thus fails to be essence-specifying.

To return from water to goodness, then, the Platonic view embraces the univocity of the good, such that the Good yields, at least in principle,[20] some essence-specifying account of the form: goodness $=_{df} \varphi$. To put the matter less formally, and to situate it in the dialectic of the Academy, we may compare this form of univocal definition to the sort Socrates demands in the *Meno*, when he castigates

[18] This approach to univocity follows Aristotle's account in *Categories* 1. It differs in appreciable ways from some later characterizations, including that e.g. of Scotus (*Ordinatio* I. 3. 2.2 6): 'And lest there be a dispute about the name "univocation", I designate that concept univocal which possesses sufficient unity in itself, so that to affirm and deny it of one and the same thing would be a contradiction. It also has sufficient unity to serve as the middle term of a syllogism, so that wherever two extremes are united by a middle term that is one in this way, we may conclude to the union of the two extremes among themselves'. For Scotus, then, a term is univocal if, and only if, (i) affirming it and its negation of the same subject yields a contradiction and (ii) it is validity-preserving when serving as a middle term of a syllogism. While Scotus's formulation has some clear drawbacks, a suitable revision of its conditions could serve as corollary of the formation given in the text.

[19] This common example derives from Putnam (1975) but is not beholden to the particular reasons Putnam and his followers adhered to in arriving at this judgement; nor does it rely upon the thought that this identity statement is an instance of the necessary a posteriori. The point in the present context is rather that it represents an instance of a non-disjunctive essence-specifying account.

[20] It is, of course, possible that the good is indefinable, because simple, if simples are held to be indefinable precisely because they are simple. This question matters greatly for a precise specification of Plato's preferred metaphysics of goodness. In the present context, however, we may let the question recede, for two reasons. First, Aristotle's primary contention is that the good is not something one, common, and universal. If it is indefinable because simple, then the good is one, which is just the view Aristotle rejects. Second, there is a looming question about the paradox of analysis in this context, as to whether it is in fact correct to insist that whatever is simple is indefinable because simple. In the present context, however, the same question will arise, on the assumption that a simple is definable, since, precisely because it is definable, it will again be one, which is precisely the view Aristotle attacks. His concern is to show, that is, that goodness is non-univocal. Sufficient for this task, and so for the rejection of the Platonic view however understood with respect to the question of definition, is the task of showing that goodness is meant in many ways, which entails, if true, that goodness is non-univocal, that there is, again, that it admits of no single, non-disjunctive essence-specifying account.

Meno for offering a definition of virtue (ἀρετή) as differing across a range of applications: (a) for a man, the ability to manage civic affairs and to benefit his friends while harming his enemies; or (b) for a woman, managing her home well while being submissive to her husband; or (c) something else yet again for children, for the elderly, and for slaves. Indeed, there is a virtue 'for every action and every age' (*Meno* 70a–71d). Socrates responds that he is not seeking a swarm of definitions but one only, namely the one which captures the Form whose presence makes all these virtuous people and deeds virtuous, in the way that all bees of whatever type have something in common in virtue of which they are all bees, or the way in which all shapes have something in common in virtue of which they are shapes (*Meno* 71e–72a, 72a–b, 72c–d, 74b–76b; cf. *Euthyp*. 11a–b). Socrates is here requesting a univocal definition of virtue (ἀρετή). He demands, and so evidently presupposes, univocity. So too for the Good.

As we will see, this feature of the Platonic view will prove especially important when we come to assess the cogency of Aristotle's arguments against the view he targets as well as the eventual aptness of the alternative he promotes.

1.1.3 Goodness Is Something Common

If the good is something common (κοινόν), then it is somehow shared by all good things; but this is not yet to say that the good is a universal in the sense that it is present and identical in all of its instances; still less is it to say that it is an *ante rem* universal, where this is understood to mean that it exists necessarily, without existential dependence on its instances, in contrast to in rebus realism, understood as the doctrine that universals exist when and only when manifested by their instances.

On this point, it is crucial to appreciate that Aristotle regularly castigates Plato, in express contrast to his praise of Socrates, for *separating* Forms (*Met*. M 9, 1086a31–b14).[21] This is made especially clear in the fragment of Aristotle's *Peri Ideôn* which Alexander of Aphrodisias provides in his commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* A 9. There Aristotle retails arguments for the existence of Forms which he says are invalid when understood as arguments for separated universals but are nonetheless perfectly valid when construed as arguments for common things (κοινά). So, in his view, something might be common (κοινόν) without being separate (χωριστόν), and so might in principle be universal without being an *ante rem* universal. Moreover, something might even be common without being universal at all, in the way that there is something common to Duns Scotus and Iris Murdoch, namely that they both lectured in Oxford, without its being the

[21] On the question of separation and Aristotle's criticisms in *EN* i 6 and *EE* i 8, see also ns. 34–38.

case that there is some universal, *having lectured in Oxford*, which each lecturer instantiates.[22] In fact, some of Plato's language, and in particular his paradeigmatism,[23] suggests that he supposes that one Form might be common to many particulars while standing in a one–many relation to them without thereby being wholly present in each of them, in the manner of a universal. Or, it might equally be the case, as suggested in the *Phaedo* (102d6–8, 103b5; cf. *Rep*. v 476a5–7), that each Form is immanent in each of the particulars named after it, perhaps in the manner of a universal, but perhaps not.

That allowed, in Aristotle's own treatment in the *Peri Ideôn*, it seems clear that common things are universals,[24] but not separate universals. If this is correct, then Aristotle's denial that the good is something common is at least the denial that it is an *in rebus* universal. This, though, leads to the question of what it means in this context to say that goodness is something universal.

1.1.4 The Form of the Good Is Universal

In addition to being common, according to Aristotle at least, the Platonists treat Goodness as *universal*,[25] in as much as they treat genera as substances and universals (*τὰ καθόλου*) and they treat these as principles and universals (*Met*. *Λ* 1, 1069a26–29; *Met*. Z 14, 1039a24–34 and H 1, 1042a14–16). In characterizing the Platonic theory with this descriptor, however, one courts a reasonable sort of objection, namely that we have imported a markedly Aristotelian term into a Platonic context where it has no real resonance. After all, this is a term belonging to Aristotle's idiom rather than Plato's: in fact the technical term 'universal' (*τὸ καθόλου*) is a word alien to the Platonic corpus, and is current in earlier writers only in non-technical uses.[26] More exactly, Plato uses something approximating this expression in only one line, *Meno* 77a6, where he wants to make clear that he is 'speaking about virtue as a whole, <wanting to specify> what it is' (*κατὰ ὅλου εἰπὼν ἀρετῆς πέρι ὅτι ἐστίν*).[27] Even here, however, it is unclear whether we should take Plato's use of the expression as at all technical ('speaking about virtue as a universal') or rather more loosely (perhaps 'speaking about virtue

[22] See Fine (1993), along with the critical notice by Shields (1995).

[23] See § 1.1.5 for a characterization of Plato's paradeigmatism.

[24] See Fine (1993).

[25] This assumes, with Ross (1924 vol. ii 350), that the philosophers of the present day to whom Aristotle refers are 'evidently the Platonists'. For an opposing view, see Ps.-Alexander, *Comm. in Aris. Met*. 670, 12–19. Here it is noteworthy that Aristotle also associates Platonic Forms with universals at *Met*. Z 14, 1039a24–34 and H 1, 1042a14–16.

[26] Democritus DK B 29 l. 5; Empedocles DK 35 l. 15; Aesch. *Trag. frag. tet.* 44, A 639. l. 3.

[27] More or less, because Aristotle's word *καθόλου* connects *καθ' ὅλου*, which as *LSJ* (s.v.) remarks is 'as it shd. perh. be written', a stylistic variant on Plato's *κατὰ ὅλου*. In its non-technical use, it means, simply, 'taken generally' or 'taken universally' or 'taken as a whole' or simply 'generally'. When 'taken universally' means 'taken under the guise of a universal', then it becomes something more technical. It is yet another semantic step to use the expression *καθόλου* referentially, as denoting *a* universal.

generally').[28] If we take it more loosely, if Plato is simply using the phrase in its colloquial sense, then perhaps calling the Good something *universal* will seem an imposition, if by that we mean that it is a mind- and language-independent entity which is wholly present in all of its instances. More to the point, it may seem an imposition which does violence to a Platonic position.

This concern, though legitimate, is not compelling. In addition to the point already mentioned about technical and non-technical uses, it is important to appreciate that the Platonic view of the Good is such that the many good things are good because they stand in some relation to the Good, where, if the Good is an *ante rem* universal, then that relation will be some version of property instantiation. If, however, the Good is a perfect particular,[29] and that relation is rather some version of mimeticism, then there will remain a one–many relation between the Good and good things, though the Good will exist *ante rem* without being the sort of entity which can be wholly present at more than one location. It will, in this sense, then, fail to be a universal.

Even so, it will be fair and appropriate, and not at all an imposition, to regard the Form of the Good as *universal* in the sense that it is the same for all instances of goodness and somehow shared by them, without being wholly present in all of them. Something may be, in the sense here intended, universal without being *a* universal, as when one speaks of 'the universal church' or notes that 'status anxiety is universal among the bourgeoisie'. This would be more than saying that good things have goodness in common (*κοινόν*); it would be adding that they have goodness as a common attribute.[30]

For our purposes, we may understand the Good to be universal in something approaching the technical way without going quite the distance to its being *a* universal, though, by the same token, we do not mean to rule out the possibility that it is a universal, perhaps even an *ante rem* multiply instantiable entity capable of being wholly present in more than one place at the same time.[31]

[28] These attributes imply but do not require that Aristotle is conceiving of the good in question as a universal. Cf. *APo*. i 4, 73b26.

[29] Aristotle finds causes to criticize Plato on the grounds that Forms are somehow, objectionably, both universals and particulars, or have, effectively, both universal and particular natures (*Met*. M 9 1086a32–4, b10–11). For an analysis of the character and force of his complaint, see Shields (2008).

[30] The circumspection here reflects the observation made by the later Aristotelian Francisco Suárez (*Discourse on Metaphysics* vi 8.12; cf. *DM* ii 2.36, xxviii 3, and xxxii 2) that one might reserve the term 'universal' for what is *strictly* predicable (for him, that is, of a non-convertible categorial item, which is to say either a genus, species, difference, property, or an accident), or allow it more loosely to apply to anything common to many things, including the transcendentals—a transcendental being, in his view, any term which transcends the categories in the sense of being predicable of every being whatever—which are, again, according to Suárez, interpredicable of one another. Such a 'universally' predicated term might not be a universal in the narrow sense, while remaining a universal in the more relaxed sense and it may do so, at least according to Suárez, even analogically. Plainly, this is a question one will want to raise, and so, for now, to leave open, regarding predications of goodness.

[31] Eustratius (*in Eth*. 40, 27–29) ascribes the view to Plato that transcendent Forms are universals and yet also one 'because each of them, while being one, contains many things which come to be in a body and enmattered from it and in accordance with it'. This serves to illustrate that the notions of *being one* and *being universal* need not—and indeed are not always—taken to be mutually exclusive.

Taking that all together, in saying that the Good is universal, we do not distinguish between its being *a* universal and universally present to all good things in precisely the same way. If it is *a* universal then it will in fact be universally present to all good things by being wholly present in each of them; but it might be universally present without being a universal. Further, even if it is a universal, the Good might be *in rebus* or *ante rem*. As we gauge Aristotle's arguments about the Platonic View of the Good, we will need to remain alive to these more fine-grained distinctions. We must step lightly here, however, because in fact the language of universals and of commonality more generally, where these are regarded as technical terms with precisely delineated meanings, is still in its infancy.

1.1.5 The Form of the Good Is a Paradigm

Questions about commonality and universality are further complicated by Plato's paradeigmatism. In one critical passage, Plato gives especially clear voice to a common theme in his characterization of Forms in general: 'What appears most clear to me at least is this: while Forms are set in nature just as paradigms (παραδείγματα), other things are similar to them and are likenesses; and this partaking of the Forms is for the others nothing other than their resembling them' (*Parm*. 132c12–d4). Paradeigmatism is thus an ideal attribute of Forms, and so holds of the Form of the Good, provided, of course, that our first trait obtains, namely that the Form of the Good is a Form.

So, accepting this commitment at face value, we may take as uncontroversial the claim that the Good is a paradigm, indeed that *being a paradigm* is one of its ideal attributes. It remains only to determine the way in which Forms are to be understood as paradigms. Here it serves to recall the way in which we saw that the Good might be universal in either of two ways: by being universally present or by being *a* universal. The first, but not the second, disjunct leaves open the possibility that the Good is a particular of some sort, perhaps a perfect particular. This distinction is thus important for our understanding of paradeigmatism, since taken one way, being universal leaves open the possibility that the Good might yet be a sort of perfect particular.

Some have thought this possibility not only convenient but necessary, given that paradeigmatism positively requires that Forms be particulars, because it requires that they exemplify the property or feature for which they are held to be paradigmatic.[32] This thought, though incorrect, is understandable enough: if the Form φ is a paradigm for φ-things, and φ-things manage to be only by resembling the Form φ in respect of being Φ, then surely the Form must itself be φ. This in

[32] So Ross (1953, 89) and Runciman (1959, 158). See Shields (2008) for a discussion of this matter.

turn leads many to infer that Forms must be self-predicative, that they must exemplify the properties they are. After all, resemblance is symmetrical: *x* and *y* resemble each other in respect of being-φ only if *x* is φ and *y* is φ. The thought lies near, then, that a proper account of paradeigmatism would require shared-property exemplification and thus that all Forms, in virtue of their ideal attributes, be perfect particulars.

The contention that paradeigmatism requires shared-property exemplification fails twice over, however. It fails first because *x* and *y* can share a property φ even though one is a particular and the other a universal; so, paradeigmatism does not require that Forms be particulars. The Form of Beauty, assuming it is both a universal and self-exemplifying, can equally exemplify beauty. Further, it is a mistake to suppose that resemblance, or mimeticism more broadly, requires shared-property exemplification. Thus, six bungalows in a post-war housing development can all be copies of the single blueprint serving as the paradigm in accordance with which all are built. The blueprint, though, does not exemplify the property of being a house, since it is not a house, but a two-dimensional schematic of a house. The blueprint merely *encodes* being a house.[33] So, in sum, paradeigmatism is compatible with perfect particularity but does not require it; similarly, it is consistent with shared-property exemplification between paradigm and copy, but, once again, does not require it.

What really matters for *paradeigmatism* is that a Form, as a paradigm, be *normatively regulative* for its instances. In keeping with this requirement, then, one ideal attribute of the Form of the Good will be this: it serves as a norm in terms of which all good things, of whatever degree of goodness, qualify as good. This attribute, too, will come in for special criticism in Aristotle's treatment.

1.1.6 The Form of the Good Is Separate

Now, there is another attribute of Forms which, like being universal, derives more directly form Aristotle's characterization of the Forms than of anything Plato says overtly or explicitly. This is that the Form of the Good is separate (*χωριστόν*). Given the origin of this feature, we must, as in the case of the universal, tread with some care. This seems, in Aristotle's view, to be an ideal feature of Forms, which is to say, again, a feature all Forms manifest simply in virtue of their being Forms. This feature, then, trivially belongs to the Form of the Good—if, indeed, it is a feature of any Form at all: namely, *separation* (*χωριστόν*).

It is worth stressing that the evidence for this ascription is almost entirely Aristotelian. In fact, judged from the standpoint of Plato's own writings, the

[33] The language of exemplification and encoding follows the distinction as drawn in Shields (1995).

Platonic attitude towards separation can only be regarded as difficult to ascertain. Plato does not engage the question of the separation of Forms directly in the language Aristotle uses to characterize his view;[34] consequently, most of our direct data regarding the separation of Forms derive from Aristotle, who is a complex source of neutral data on this as on other topics in Platonic metaphysics.[35] Aristotle praises and condemns Plato in a single breath on the grounds, that he, like Socrates before him, was right to seek the common accounts or definitions for items in any given domain of *explananda*, only to take a grievous misstep in separating the *explanantia* from the items in the domain once isolated (*Met*. M 9, 1086a31–b14):

> One can see at the same time the approach of those who speak of Ideas and the problem with their doing so. The problems why these things cannot be so have been gone through earlier. They at once make the Ideas, as substances,[36] universals, and, as separate (χωριστάς), also make them number among the particulars… Just as we said earlier, this is something Socrates set in motion, because of his definitions, but even so he did not himself separate them from particulars. And he thought rightly in not separating them. This is clear from the results: for while without the universal it is not possible to attain knowledge, separating them (τὸ χωρίζειν) is the cause of the difficulties which accrue concerning the Ideas. They [Socrates's successors] regarded it as necessary, if there are going to be substances beyond (παρά) the sensible and flowing substances, that they be separate (χωριστάς); but they did not have others and instead selected the things predicated universally, with the result that universals and particulars were practically the same sorts of natures (*Met*. M 9, 1086a32–b11).

[34] Aristotle, unlike Plato, uses the adjective 'separate' or 'separable' (χωριστόν) freely of Plato's Forms (*EN* i 6, 1096b33, *Met*. M 9, 1086b9). Plato does not use this adjective in connection with Forms; indeed, he does not use this adjective at all, anywhere in his corpus. He does use the associated noun form, separation (χωρισμός), twice, but only in connection with the soul (*Phaedo* 67d4, d9). More importantly, though, he does use the adverb 'separately' (χωρίς) repeatedly in connection with Forms, as at *Parm*. 129d7, 130b2 (though here it is perhaps non-technical, since immediately thereafter (130b4) he uses it in connection to the particulars participating in Forms), and 131b2.

[35] On Aristotle as a source for Platonic philosophy, see Shields (2006) and (2008). For a protracted, deeply learned, but injudicious exploration of this topic, Cherniss (1962), whose contribution is engagingly discussed by Gerson (2014). Gerson (2014, 397) fairly cautions those relying on Aristotle's criticisms of Plato as sources of data, neutral or otherwise, to step lightly lest they find themselves needing to 'defend the *prima facie* implausible claim that evidence other than the dialogues themselves can sometimes trump Plato's own words as evidence for his philosophical position'. In the case of separation, we are not in the extreme situation of seeking to override Plato's express words with words offered him by Aristotle, because he offers no words at all on this topic; but we are nevertheless in the neighbouring situation of possibly allowing Aristotle to provide Plato's words for him, when he has preferred to remain silent.

[36] Reading ὡς οὐσίας with the ms. at 1086a33, rejecting Jaeger's seclusion, which was earlier also secluded by Ross (1924, vol. 2, 462). Aristotle is ascribing a motive to Plato, perhaps fairly, perhaps not; but if not, that is not a reason for supposing that he did not in fact ascribe this motive to him.

If Aristotle's ascription is accurate,[37] then the Form of the Good, like all other Forms, is separate.

What it means for them to be separate is, however, a disputed matter. Some things Aristotle says make it reasonable to suppose that he, at any rate, understands separation to involve a kind of asymmetrical independence, either existential (*Met*. Z 1 1028a33–34, *Δ* 11, 1019a1–4) or definitional (*Met*. Z 1, 1028a35–36).[38] If he is consistent in the application of his terminology, then in criticizing Plato along these lines, Aristotle is faulting him for supposing either (i) that Forms can exist without particulars, whereas particulars cannot exist without Forms or (ii) that one can offer an essence-specifying account of Forms without mentioning particulars, but that the converse does not hold. Perhaps he thinks that Plato holds to both sorts of separation where Forms are concerned. If so, then he equally thinks this about the Form of the Good. Before ascribing separation to the Form of the Good, though, it would be necessary to explore these questions in considerable detail.

Although these questions take us slightly beyond our current remit, they are no less relevant to our study, because when we turn to consider Aristotle's criticism of Plato's Form of the Good, we find that in one passage (*Eudemian Ethics* i 8), he foregrounds considerations of separation, and in another (*Nicomachean Ethics* i 6), he ignores these considerations almost completely. Because we take the latter text as the spine of our study, we do not engage this trait except en passant in a consideration of its arguments. Even so, there remains a question as to whether concerns about separation play any crucial role in the background assumptions generating Aristotle's arguments against the Platonic conception of goodness.

[37] There is a fair question as to whether it is accurate, and indeed, a prior question as to what is meant in making this ascription. Fine rightly observes (1983, 33): 'Although Aristotle is correct to say that Plato is committed to the separation of some PFs [Platonic Forms], he is wrong to suggest, as he seems to, that (4) [viz. separation] is a Platonic criterion for substance, a criterion Plato argues his PFs satisfy. It is in fact surprisingly difficult to find any commitment to separation in the dialogues; the issue is never explicitly broached, and Plato certainly never offers (4) as a criterion for substance. Aristotle could thus have prosecuted his dialectical case against Plato quite fairly without invoking (4) and in view of the difficulties he himself has with (4)…, this would have been to his advantage'.

[38] *Existential separation* is an extensional notion: on this approach, *a* is separate from *b* iff (i) *a* can exist without *b*, but (ii) *b* cannot exist without *a*. *Definitional separation* is an intensional notion: on this approach, *a* can exist without *b* iff (i) it is possible to provide an essence-specifying account of *a* without mentioning b and (ii) it is not possible to provide an essence-specifying account of *b* without mentioning *a*. See Fine (1983) and (1984) and, for an in-depth analysis of the notion of priority in Aristotle, see Peramatzis (2011). These metaphysical matters take us beyond our present task, but, briefly, if Platonic Forms are separate in the existential sense, then they can exist without other things, presumably sense particulars, but these other things cannot exist without them. If they are definitionally separate, then one can provide an essence-specifying account of them without mentioning other things, again presumably sense particulars, but one cannot provide an essence-specifying account of these other things without mentioning them in return.

1.1.7 Aristotle's Target

Taking them all together, these six features of the Form of the Good, most, though not all, of which have a clear Platonic provenance, constitute the primary focus of Aristotle's concern with the Platonic view of the Good he criticizes. This is the view, in short, which he subjects to critical appraisal. As we have seen, however, even this much specificity allows some latitude, with the result that the Platonic View of the Good might yet appear to be something of a moving target. Even so, if there is some marginal unclarity around the Platonic View of the Good, there nonetheless remains a view to be assessed, and one can and should ask how Aristotle's arguments fare as understood against any given precisification of this view.

As a first approach we may accept as governing assumptions, then, the following non-dogmatic understanding of these views. First, the Platonic View of the Good is Plato's own view of the Good, probably held in common with some other Academics (so Aristotle's ascription of the view he criticizes in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 to plural 'friends' of his (*φιλοῖς*; *EN* i 6, 1096a13)). Absent any finding to the effect that Aristotle's arguments are so abysmal when understood as targeting Plato's own view that charity demands that we look elsewhere for a presumed target—and, to repeat, this is not a conclusion we may reach in advance of detailing his arguments and it is not, in fact, a conclusion we will reach after having done so—it is reasonable to assume that Plato's view is front and centre in Aristotle's discussion. Here again it is worth emphasizing that while he often enough criticizes Plato by name, Aristotle sometimes criticizes views that are recognizably Platonic without naming Plato as their author.[39] Further, although the doxographical question of the provenance of the views under attack in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 and *Eudemian Ethics* i 8, are inherently interesting and important, those reluctant to accept this assumption, again, may yet profit by considering the arguments as directed at the 'Platonic View of the Good', or, if they prefer, 'An Academic View of the Good', or even, if it pleases them, 'the View Aristotle Says Flows from a View Some of His Friends Maintained'.

Having noted some terminological imprecision in Aristotle's diction, we will understand our six theses, again non-dogmatically, in sum, for the sake of clarity, as:

[39] Sometimes, though, it is unclear whether Aristotle's criticisms are intended to land on Plato alone or Plato in common with other Academics, as for instance *Met*. N 4, 1091b35. Sometimes he also, in accordance with Fitzgerald's canon, criticizes Plato by criticizing the character of Socrates, as in *Politics* ii 1–5, which, though mainly concentrating on *Republic* v 461e–466d, speaks to 'what Socrates says' (*ὁ Σωκράτης φησί*) regarding wives and children and property 'in Plato's *Republic*' (*ἐν τῇ Πολιτείᾳ τῇ Πλάτωνος*) (*Pol*. ii 2, 1261a6). (Fitzgerald's canon, while perhaps a canon in only the relaxed sense of the term, remains a reasonable guide regarding ascriptions, as the case in point illustrates.)

- The Form of the Good is a Form: the Form of the Good is Form, and thus, like other Forms, has both ideal and peculiar attributes, that is, attributes which all Forms have simply in virtue of their being Forms (ideal) and attributes individual Forms have in virtue of being the Forms they are (peculiar).
- Goodness is univocal: the Form of the Good admits of a non-disjunctive essence-specifying defining account, or, if simple and it is assumed that only what is complex is definable, then the Form of the Good is indefinable—but in neither case will it admit of more than one defining account.
- Goodness is something common (*κοινόν*): All good things are good because of their participation in the Form of the Good, in which case, conversely, the Form of the Good is participated in common by all good things.
- Goodness is universal: (*καθόλου*): The Form of the God is universal (*καθόλου*), where this is reasonably taken to mean that it is *a* universal, though this is not strictly necessary
- The Form of the Good is a paradigm (*παράδειγμα*): The Form of the Good has, as an ideal attribute, being normatively regulative for the goodness of all good things.
- The Form of the Good is separate (*χωριστόν*): The Form of the Good is a mind- and language-independent entity which does not depend for its existence on the existence the good things, if any, that participate in it. It is in this sense *ante rem* rather than *in rebus*.

Although we may legitimately be concerned about the fidelity of Aristotle's ascription of the Platonic View of the Good to Plato, on the assumption, that is, that he is ascribing the Platonic View the Good to Plato, and we may wish to enquire, on that assumption, how much air there may be between Aristotle's conception of Plato's view of the Good and Plato's own conception of Plato's view of the Good, we have no neutral vantage point from which we may judge these matters conclusively. Inevitably, unless we are utterly doctrinaire, we must allow that at least some of our view of Plato's view of the Good—or of the Platonic View of the Good—derive from Aristotle himself.[40]

[40] While there has been a remarkable amount of good scholarship regarding the question of whether Aristotle provides evidence of some unwritten Platonic doctrines regarding so-called Form-numbers, that is, Forms understood as identified with or as in some way reducible to numbers (much of the discussion is unclear on just this point) and as derived from two ultimate principles, even though this is a view we do not find espoused in Plato's dialogues. In reviewing some of this literature (including Ast (1816), Hegel (1836), Trendelenburg (1826), Teichmüller (1881), Natorp (1921), Schleiermacher (1836), Zeller (1839), Shorey (1904), Burnet (1928), Taylor (1914), Robin (1908)), Cherniss (1962, ix) briefly and aptly notes: 'In modern times scholars have been concerned with Aristotle's remarks about Plato chiefly as evidence of what the latter said and meant; and yet no agreement has been reached concerning the weight and value to be assigned to this evidence'. Cherniss undertakes to correct this situation and offers us a towering scholarly accomplishment—one which, while creaking under its own weight, manages to bear on our study more than marginally but less

1.2 Preliminary Distinctions and Initial Questions

Despite these very real concerns regarding provenance, Aristotle's appraisal of the Platonic view of the Good that he offers us is completely clear: he thinks it is false. In fact, he is highly critical of it, even to the point of disparaging it as otiose and a hopeless non-starter. His view emerges primarily in two parallel passages, which overlap considerably but also differ in several key respects: *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 and *Eudemian Ethics* i 8. Aristotle inserts the first, better known discussion somewhat intrusively into the first book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where it emerges as a sort of interlude in an otherwise continuous discussion of the final good for human beings.

In general, in *Nicomachean Ethics* i, Aristotle identifies the highest good for human beings as *eudaimonia*, happiness or human flourishing (*EN* i 7). He rightly observes, however, that any such contention proves a hollow concord when shared without some further commitment concerning the nature of *eudaimonia*. After all, even those who assent to the same statement, that *eudaimonia* is the highest good, may yet harbour substantive disagreements about the character of *eudaimonia* (*EN* i 7, 1097b22); when they do, they assent to the same sentence while understanding it to express different propositions. About that much Aristotle seems surely correct: two people who agree that happiness is the highest good agree on almost nothing if one of them supposes that 'happiness' is just another name for pleasure (*EN* i 5, 1095b16–23) while the other is steadfast in her conviction that a happy life is the life of honour (*EN* i 5, 1095b23–26)—and so on for other conceptions of happiness. So, until the nature of happiness or human flourishing is fully specified, little is agreed by those variously inclined to identify the highest good as *eudaimonia*. Discussions of this matter thus turn naturally, almost inevitably—just as Aristotle turns his own discussion—to a question concerning the nature of the highest good which *eudaimonia* is meant to be.

Even before this discussion gets under way, however, we should note that it is not the case that *nothing* substantive has been agreed by the parties assenting to the sentiment that happiness is the highest good. On the contrary, even those who dispute the nature of *eudaimonia* have already accepted something significant in common: they in fact agree about something highly controversial, namely that *there is a highest good*. They simply disagree about its character. One may doubt this joint assumption in any number of ways, by holding, for instance, that although there are many goods, no one of them is pre-eminent, or, more radically, by embracing the nihilist conclusion that there is no such thing as goodness at all,

than centrally. Cherniss (1962, xxii) promises to 'avoid drawing any conclusions from such general conceptions as the "temperament" or "tendency" of Aristotelian or Platonic philosophy' and to restrict himself 'to those the support of which specific passages can be cited'. This seems a reasonable policy, and not only in narrowly doxographical contexts; but as we see in chapter 2, only a very few among those addressing themselves to Aristotle's criticisms of the Platonic View of the Good have adopted it.

such that nothing at all can meaningfully (or truthfully) be said to be good, and so, trivially, nothing qualifies as the highest good.[41]

Importantly, though, there are other less marked forms of disagreement among those who accept the existence of a highest good, the sorts of disagreement which may be masked by their initial acknowledgement that there is a highest good. Such disagreements tend to be less immediately visible than the obvious differences between those who accept *eudaimonia* as the highest good but differ about the nature of *eudaimonia*. This is because any agreement to the effect that there is a highest good, while surely non-trivial, is also crucially incomplete in another way. This we can appreciate by observing that already, even at this fairly abstract, non-specific level, a sort of problem emerges for Aristotle's interpreters and critics alike. This problem is reflected in the fact that even within the scope of just the first two paragraphs of the present section, we have ourselves already had occasion to speak not only of '*the highest good*' but also of '*the highest good for a human being*', without so much as marking the difference. Failing to mark this distinction can be unfortunate, even if we think, as some evidently do, that the '*the highest good*' and '*the highest good for a human being*' come to the same. Plainly, as can be seen upon a moment's reflection, these expressions cannot be interchanged indifferently with one another. For while in principle these claims *might* come to the same, extensionally speaking, surely they need not. They would come to the same extensionally, for example, if it were to turn out that the 'highest good for a human being' and 'the highest good' name the same thing, the Form of the Good, for instance. They might do so; but, then again, they might well not, even if there is such a thing as the Form of the Good.

This shows that one cannot simply assume that these expressions are co-referential. On the contrary, one might reasonably believe that although there is a highest good for human beings, there simply is no such thing as the highest good *simpliciter*, a highest good which is not also the highest good *for someone* or *for something*.[42] Or someone might think that there is such a thing as the highest good, an objective good, and then also another sort of good which is always subjective, which is to say that it is always at least partly constituted by the intentional

[41] There is of course a range of meta-ethical postures here, not always delineated in the same terms. Here the term 'nihilism' is used broadly to embrace both non-cognitivism and error theories of the sort Mackie (1977) espouses, according to which claims of the form '*x*…is good' are perfectly meaningful but systematically false.

[42] This is the view of Kraut (2011), and moreover, according to Kraut, the view of both Plato (2011, 209–210) and Aristotle (2011, 210–211). We will have occasion to query these contentions, but for now it should be clear that Kraut sketches at least a possible position, and if the position he sketches is at least possible, then it is also possible that the disagreement introduced in the text is also in play. One might think, for instance, that since there is no highest good *simpliciter*, the phrase 'the highest good' always contains an implicit, contextually sensitive rider, such as '…for human beings'. In arguing forcefully that there is no such thing as absolute goodness, Kraut agrees with earlier expressions of similar views by Williams (1982) and Foot (1985). One way to combat these views, not Plato's way, but surely one consistent with Plato's approach, can be found in Hurka (1987).

or affective state of some psychological subject.[43] Such a person might then contend that 'the highest good' names an objective good, whereas 'the highest good for human beings' names a subjective good, namely that good whose goodness at least partially resides in its being regarded as good by human beings.[44] Here we need not endorse either view to see that each is a possible position in logical space; this is already enough to show that talk of the highest good and the highest good *for S* may come apart. In the first case they come apart because the phrase 'the highest good', unlike the phrase 'the highest good for human beings', has vacuous reference; in the second case they come apart because the first names an objective property and the second a subjective property, and such properties of necessity mutually exclude one another.

We see, then, that when Aristotle speaks of the highest or best good in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (*τἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ ἄριστον*; 1094a22; cf. *EN* 1099a24), he may in principle be speaking of a subjective or an objective good. In fact, however, things are more complicated still, because though objective and subjective goods are mutually exclusive, they do not exhaust the kinds of goodness which may be in view in Aristotle's text. Given in particular that subjective goods constitutively depend upon the attitudes or affective states of psychological subjects, one may reasonably think that in addition to *being good simpliciter* and *being good for human beings*, where the latter is understood subjectively, there are also other forms of goodness for other sorts of living beings—being good for lambs, for trout, or for rose bushes—and then also forms of goodness which are altogether impersonal but still sortal-relative, including, for instance, functional goodness, as in the goodness of a knife or a pipe organ made in the Northern German baroque style. Aristotle plainly relies crucially on this last form of goodness,

[43] Because the terms 'objective' and 'subjective' are used variously in value theory, let us stipulate for the purposes of our explorations that (i) a property φ is subjective $=_{df}$ φ *constitutively* depends on the psychological attitudes or responses an observer has to some phenomenon and (ii) a property φ is objective $=_{df}$ φ is not subjective. So, as an easy example, *being fashionable* is a subjective property of a suit style, because for a suit to be fashionable is simply for it to be so regarded by the fashion trendsetters and their followers, whereas *being even* is an objective property of a number, because its being so is wholly independent of its being so regarded. Of course, this formulation does not tell us whether, say, *being good* or *being beautiful* or *being mauve* are objective or subjective features of things; but it does at least provide a straightforward frame of reference for adjudicating disputes about these matters. This formulation agrees with the pellucid framework adopted by Huemer (2005). Compare Gentzler (2004) and Sumner (1995), neither of whom makes constitution necessary for subjectivity. For a more metaphysically explicit and nuanced articulation of a commitment to the objectivity of goodness, see Oddie (2005). See also Rønnow-Rasmussen (2009), whose notion of personal value may be regarded, in these terms, as a very local species of subjective value, perhaps as a limiting case of a circumscribed subjective value. Finally, for a more general exploration of the varieties of goodness, see Von Wright (1963).

[44] To be clear, someone who thinks that there is a highest good for human beings that is not the same as the highest good simpliciter need not also think that the highest good for human beings is a subjective good. On the contrary, the highest good for human beings might be an objective good distinct from the good simpliciter. In the present context, we are only making vivid the point that no-one can presume without argument that the good for human beings cannot also be the same as the good simpliciter, if there is such a thing.

functional goodness, in the much discussed (and much maligned) function argument in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 7, 1097b9–1098a17.[45] As he deploys this notion in that argument, he shows that he appreciates that a distinction between functional and non-functional goodness may cut across a distinction between subjective and objective goodness. In consequence, we find ourselves confronted with a complex set of overlapping distinctions which must be kept distinct.

For the sake of clarity, let us name a first conception of the highest good, goodness simpliciter, as an *absolute conception* of the highest good, and mean by that, in a preliminary way, a kind of goodness which is not qualified in any way: not goodness *for* someone or something; not goodness *insofar as* something is φ, where being-φ is some manner of predicate, whether sortal or non-sortal, whether kind-indicating or not, insofar, that is, as something is a shepherd, or an algorithm, or an opportunity, or a performer on the operatic stage; not goodness *as so regarded* by someone; not goodness *relative* to some agent or interest; not *functional goodness*, goodness as excelling at a function or task.[46]

Let us then, by contrast, call the second, contrasting set of notions *circumscribed conceptions* of goodness, and mean by this all the forms of goodness which are in some way or other keyed to a limiting predicate or interest or perspective.[47] These broad categories, between absolute and circumscribed conceptions of the final good, are meant to be mutually exclusive and exhaustive, though, again, the various forms of circumscribed goods need not be mutually exclusive, since, for instance, functional and sortal kinds will come to the same, at least extensionally speaking, if the sortals in question happen to be functional predicates, like *being poisonous*. Even so, despite this overlap, the notions are importantly distinct and

[45] For a brief overview of the argument see Shields (2014, 373–380). The literature on this argument is voluminous. For a classic critical assessment see Glassen (1957); for a defense against the sorts of criticisms Glassen mounts see Whiting (1988). Although it is not usually put in these terms, Glassen's gap, as it is called, turns on accusing Aristotle of conflating two forms of value, namely a predicate-relative functional value (being a good knife, flute, or human, because functioning well relative to its kind) and a non-functional form of individual or personal value (being good *for* a knife or *for* a flute or, more to the point, *for* a human). The worry turns on the fact that someone might excel functionally, say, by being a great milliner, even though being so is not good for the milliner, if millinery involves prolonged exposure to mercury.

[46] These ways of dividing circumscribed goods need not be mutually exclusive. To take but one example, when a kind K is a functional kind, like a knife, its sortal-dependent goodness and functional goodness will come to the same thing. Still, the different ways of indexing goodness listed correspond to the various ways people have thought about characterizing non-absolute goods. See Geach (1956), Von Wright (1963), Wiggins (2009), Shields (2015), Segvic (2004), Oddie (2013) and (2017), and especially Kraut (2011).

[47] This manner of speaking replaces the distinction articulated in Shields (2015) between 'indexed' and 'absolute' goods, primarily because the phrase 'indexed goods' already has received usages for (i) fine-grained discriminations within circumscribed goods, such that, for instance, milk might be good for babies, excepting individual babies who are lactose-intolerant, so that we may say that milk is good for babies, but indexed only to a subset within the domain, and relatedly (ii) for discussions of the 'index problem' in treatments of egalitarianism and distributive justice more widely, namely the problem of constructing appropriate indices for the measurement of distributive principles. The difference in terminology, however, marks no shift in meaning, and is introduced only to avoid confusion.

thus are usefully distinguished in some contexts. This is all the more so since it might also turn out that an absolute good, which is by stipulation non-circumscribed, could turn out to also be good for someone or something, even necessarily so, in the sense that it could be good, for instance, for someone to grow as close as possible to the absolute good, or even, to use one of Plato's preferred idioms, to imitate it as best they are able.

Taking that all together, when we approach Aristotle's treatment of the highest good, we must keep in mind two criss-crossing distinctions: (i) between objective and subjective goods and (ii) between circumscribed and absolute goods. Further, when we turn to his criticisms of the Academic approach to goodness, we will need to bear in mind how he conceives of the view he puts under review. So far, we have committed ourselves to accepting that the Platonic view of the good is *inter alia* objective and non-circumscribed. To repeat, however, we have *not* thereby said that an absolute good cannot, suitably understood, *also* be good *for someone* or *for something*. As we have already suggested, it might turn out to be the case that it is good for a subject to be as close to the absolute good as it can be, or, as Aristotle himself possibly thought (*EN* x 7, 1177a12–b26), and as some later Christian Aristotelians definitely did think,[48] that it might be good for an intellectual subject to contemplate the absolute good as its primary or exclusive object of intellection. In these ways, it might be good for something to orient itself towards the absolute good, to gravitate towards it in thought or deed. It would not follow that the absolute good would then become a circumscribed good; a circumscribed good is essentially circumscribed and an absolute good essentially not circumscribed. There is, in general, no impediment to both an absolute good's being absolute and its being the case that it is also good for someone or something to bear near it. What a good cannot be is both subjective, and so essentially circumscribed by a subject whose affective or intentional attitudes at least partly constitute it, and also an absolute and therefore objective good.

Once cast in terms of these orienting distinctions, at least three preliminary questions regarding Aristotle's talk of a highest or best good come immediately to the fore.

First, in speaking of the highest good is he speaking only of a circumscribed good, for instance, of the good for human beings?[49] Aristotle speaks easily and unselfconsciously of the best, that is, the highest good (*τἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ ἄριστον*;

[48] So, e.g. Aquinas, *ST* Suppl. 92, resp.

[49] This is the view of Brüllmann (2011). This is an understandable interpretation for many parts of *EN* i, but also one difficult to square with some passages, including most notably *EN* i 12, 1101b29–31, where Aristotle praises Eudoxus's contention that some goods are above being praised. Eudoxus thought (wrongly in Aristotle's view) that pleasure was the highest good, but (rightly in Aristotle's view) that some goods are beyond praise, because 'superior to everything praiseworthy, but [only] god and the good are of this sort [*scil.* beyond praise], since other goods [are praised] by reference to them' (*ὅτι κρεῖττόν ἐστι τῶν ἐπαινετῶν, τοιοῦτον δ' εἶναι τὸν θεὸν καὶ τἀγαθόν· πρὸς ταῦτα γὰρ καὶ τἆλλα ἀναφέρεσθαι*).

EN i 2, 1094a17–21); but he does so in contexts where it would be natural, if not unavoidable, for him to be speaking of a circumscribed good, the best good *for human beings*. He is, after all, in this context thinking about 'some end among things attainable in action which we wish for because of itself' (*τι τέλος ἐστὶ τῶν πρακτῶν ὃ δι' αὑτὸ βουλόμεθα*; *EN* i 2, 1094a18–19), which might reasonably be taken to indicate *our* end, the end understood as a good *of* or *for* humans exclusively. Given, however, that the end we seek might in principle be understood in absolute terms, such that it is also simultaneously a good towards which human beings will wish to gravitate, Aristotle's proceeding in this way does not settle the matter.

This, though, leads directly into our second question: does Aristotle allow, explicitly or implicitly, that there is such a thing as absolute goodness, a form of goodness which is utterly objective and domain-indifferent?[50] Or does he recognize, perhaps as part of an anti-Platonic posture, only circumscribed goods?[51] Our attitude towards this question will inform our approach to some additional questions down the line concerning Aristotle's objections to the Platonic conception of the good. For instance, does Aristotle perhaps at root object to the Platonic commitment to the very existence of a non-circumscribed good? Or does he think, more mildly, that the existence of such a good is simply idle—that even if it does exist, the absolute good is irrelevant to the programme of determining how best to live? A civic engineer might think that realism about numbers is false or even silly; or she might think, on the contrary, that realism about numbers is perfectly true—but that such questions are best left to the philosophers of mathematics, that they are simply not germane to her interest in building functional, sturdy bridges. In this way, she might happily grant the objective existence of numbers while comfortably ignoring that fact when going about her work; perhaps, she might reasonably aver, such questions are actually a distraction and an annoyance to the builder when building.

Third, if we assume for the nonce that Aristotle does countenance a notion of absolute goodness, but is nonetheless concerned in *Nicomachean Ethics* i only with a circumscribed notion of goodness, namely *the good for human beings*,[52] then a further question comes to the fore: how should we conceive the relation he sees, if any, between the absolute and circumscribed conceptions of goodness? Our answer to this question, too, will have implications for how we understand his attitude towards the Platonic Good. In particular, does he object to the contention that the highest good is absolute as opposed to being circumscribed? If so, is this his primary complaint?

[50] Kraut (2011) argues that he does not.

[51] Again, see Kraut (2011).

[52] In his instructive study on these topics, Brüllmann (2011, 12 n. 6) contends on the basis of *EN* i 13, 1102a13–15 that the good outside expressly Platonic contexts in *EN* i is *always* and without exception the best or highest good for human beings.

1.3 The Axiological Character of Aristotle's Complaint

This last question concerning the main focus of Aristotle's complaint, though crucial to our study, becomes quickly vexing. In one way, we have a wealth of detail to consider as we approach it, because Aristotle pauses in the middle of his preliminary discussions of the highest good in *Nicomachean Ethics* i to consider and reject a view of the good which is resolutely absolute, namely (some version of) the Platonic view of the Good. This view Aristotle rejects several times over, by denying that goodness is 'something common, universal, and one' (*κοινόν τι καθόλου καὶ ἕν*, *EN* i 6, 1096a28). His reasons for going down this path are, however, hotly disputed, and have tended to divide his readers, both interpretatively and evaluatively.

This is in part because most of Aristotle's objections to the Platonic view of the Good are primarily axiological rather than normative in character, and are for this reason inherently abstract and complex. Further, when Aristotle levels a criticism against the axiological features of the Platonic view of the Good, our assessment of their worth perforce brings us into contact with some broader themes in both Plato's and Aristotle's metaphysics and thus into some themes which equally divide their readers, again no less interpretatively than evaluatively.

In speaking of the *axiological* versus the *normative* features of Plato's and Aristotle's investigations into the good, we are using the term 'axiology' to designate a family of concerns in the metaphysics of value, including but not limited to questions such as: What is intrinsic value? Which things have intrinsic value? Are there irreducibly distinct kinds of goodness? Are all good things commensurable? Are all values commensurable? Ordinally rankable? Always comparable, and so always ranked as better or worse or the same? Is value additive? Or is it organic, in the sense that the good of a whole is better than the sum of the goods of its parts?[53]

While no doubt carrying indirect consequences for how we ought to conduct our lives, these sorts of questions are never the less importantly distinct from such comparatively practical normative questions as: 'What is my duty in this situation?' 'How should I act when called upon to sacrifice my interest?' 'How ought I to live my life?' These sorts of questions, when contrasted with axiological questions mentioned, all appear action-directive. Perhaps answers to the axiological questions posed will have indirect normative consequences for action; but this is not obviously so. Perhaps, for instance, the fact that goodness is organic rather than additive will feature into certain deliberations about how we ought to act; but, again, if so, that will need further argumentation, and, even then, evidently, it will not follow that the organic character of goodness itself will direct or command this course of action rather than that. Hence, even if there is some

[53] See Oddie (2001) for a superior discussion of some of these fundamental issues of axiology and the problems they pose for value theory.

overlap at the margins, axiological and normative questions diverge significantly in character and orientation.[54]

With just this much by way of preliminary stage setting, we are in a position to become clearer about the primarily axiological character of Aristotle's criticism of the Platonic account of goodness. To be sure, he does raise some objections pertaining to its relevance to the conduct of our lives (*EN* i 6, 1096b35–1097a14). He raises these objections, however, as a sort of addendum to his primary discussion, as a targeted response to someone who might wish to insist, as Plato himself does (*Parm*. 132c12–d4), that the Good must serve as a sort of paradigm (παράδειγμα), such that it will equip those with knowledge of it to recognize more readily the circumscribed good-for-us which is our concern in normative ethics. After all, as Aristotle himself observes, one might suppose that 'by possessing this paradigm, we will also know those goods that are good for us, and by coming to know them, we will be able to hit upon them' (παράδειγμα τοῦτ' ἔχοντες μᾶλλον εἰσόμεθα καὶ τὰ ἡμῖν ἀγαθά, κἂν εἰδῶμεν, ἐπιτευξόμεθα αὐτῶν; *EN* i 6, 1097a1–2). Although we will certainly investigate these criticisms as well, we note here that they expressly depart in character from the primary complaints of the chapter, which mainly prescind from practical matters altogether, focussing instead, again, on the axiological features of the view under scrutiny.

These normative questions emerge as a sort of coda to the core of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, then, inasmuch as they move away from its primary orientation. The chapter should thus be read as an axiological interpolation into an avowedly normative treatise, a treatise dedicated to the question of the good for human beings, with a principal eye on the question of how we ourselves might become good (*EN* i 2, 1094b11–13, ii 2, 1103b27–31, x 9, 1179b1–10). This is not to say, however, that it is irrelevant to the primarily normative character of the work. On the contrary, as Aristotle elsewhere makes clear, though action (πρᾶξις) is his primary concern, especially as the study of ethics gives way to political science (*EN* i 3,

[54] Here it is perhaps worth noting that the sort of contrast I have in mind is sometimes designated as a contrast between the axiological and the *deontic* rather than as a contrast between the axiological and the *normative*, as, for instance, by Oates (1963: 15–16, 49, 130). In some ways, perhaps, this way of putting the distinction has been superseded, but it has its advantages and is still used crisply and cleanly by, for instance, Bader (2013), who, in discussing Cohen's rehabilitation of conservatism, observes: 'conservatism involves a commitment to valuing something as being a particular valuable thing, rather than merely valuing it for the value that resides in this thing. In this way, the value of an object is not restricted to its intrinsic value. There is, accordingly, reason to regret the destruction of what is intrinsically valuable which is not reducible to its intrinsic value. Prima facie, the conservative bias can be construed in two ways, namely (i) the object has additional value in virtue of existing, above and beyond the value that it derives from its intrinsic properties, leading to a bias in its favour, or (ii) adequately responding to the value of something that exists requires us to be biased in its favour. In other words, this conservative commitment can be construed either axiologically or deontically. Still, because 'deontological' ethical theories are more often contrasted with forms of consequentialist theories, it seems best to avoid confusion by contrasting 'axiological' rather with 'normative', though neither contrast is, linguistically speaking, perfectly happy.

1095a5–6), the good remains an action-generating principle (ἀρχή), as both wellspring and goal (*Mot. An.* 7, 701a20–25).

In *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, Aristotle introduces his axiological discussion this way:

> We had presumably better consider the universal <good> and run through the puzzles concerning what is meant by it—even though this sort of investigation is distasteful to us, because those who introduced the Forms are friends of ours. Yet presumably it would be the better course to destroy even what is close to us, as something necessary for preserving the truth—and all the more so, given that we are philosophers. For though we love them both, piety bids us to honour the truth before our friends (*EN* i 6, 1096a11–17).

This rich passage, whose last sentence is reminiscent of a similar remark of Plato's,[55] leads us in many directions, but, for now, let us focus on one of them only: the subject of enquiry.

So far, strictly speaking, Aristotle has said only that he had presumably better consider the universal (καθόλου);[56] it becomes clear soon enough, however, that he has universal *goodness* in his sights (*EN* i 6, 1096a19–25). In proceeding in this manner, it is already clear that the view of the good Aristotle intends to address is an Academic theory of the good. The theory owes to his friends (φίλοι; *EN* i 6, 1096a13), the ones who introduced or embraced the theory of Forms. Even so, Aristotle proceeds, as is customary for him, by characterizing the view of his friends in his own idiom; the technical term he uses to describe the Academic theory of the good, 'universal' (καθόλου), a word current only in non-technical use in earlier writers and, moreover, a word not attested at all in the Platonic corpus.[57] We will in due course want to reflect on the cogency of proceeding this way, but first it is important to situate Aristotle's chapter in its proper metaphysical framework within *Nicomachean Ethics* i.

[55] This may be intentional or not, but Aristotle's contention here is immediately redolent of a remark Plato makes about Homer, after expressing his own reluctance to criticize a poet beloved of him since his youth: 'Still', he says, 'a man's honour is not preferred to the truth' (*Rep.* x 595b7–c2).

[56] Some will reasonably suppose that his exhortation might be understood more mildly: 'we had *perhaps* (ἴσως) better…' Aristotle's language here should not, however, be taken to indicate tentativeness. Aristotle's use of the word ἴσως varies, just as does our use of our word 'presumably'—sometimes strengthening, sometimes qualifying, sometimes neutral. So, e.g. *Met.* A 6, 987a26 seems plainly intended to push a point forward. In the present context, any reluctance Aristotle may have owes, he informs us, to personal affection; but as he promptly also informs us, this affection does not dissuade him from taking up the task at hand. He thus evidently recognizes this matter as sufficiently philosophically important to override any personal reluctance he may feel. One question thus concerns why he thinks it should be engaged at all—why it is so important that it must be assayed, despite the discomfort it occasions. To be clear, Aristotle does *not* say that it is to be considered simply *because* those who developed a view pertinent to it are friends of his. On the contrary, he reports this as the source of his disquiet.

[57] See § 1.1.4 and n. 27 for a discussion of this term.

The first and most crucial point is that if it presents itself as an interlude, *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 does not therefore present itself as a digression. At any rate, it does not present itself as a digression if a digression is an interruption leading one pointlessly away from a main line of investigation, as some manner of byway which, however charming or engaging, is at best tangentially related to the main theme of the work. For, on the contrary, this chapter does have an immediate relevance to the discussion of the first book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

This may be obscured by the chapter's opening. There Aristotle indicates that *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 is a temporary redirection of topic. Further, the following chapter expressly redirects the discourse back to the dominant thread of *Nicomachean Ethics* i: 'But let us return (ἐπανέλθωμεν) to the good being sought…' (*EN* i 7, 1097a15), where that good is precisely *eudaimonia*.

The chapter does, then, have the character of a framed interlude. One may thus ask: what sort of interlude is it? More importantly, why does it occur just where it occurs in the flow of the first book? Does it contribute anything to our understanding of Aristotle's positive doctrine, or is it mainly a kind of ground-clearing, preparing the way for a proper, useful investigation of the human good? Or, worse, is it merely a self-indulgent swipe, gratuitously treating the Academics to some pointless eristic for sport?

To answer these sorts of questions, we must return to the chapter's primarily axiological character. Briefly put, *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 is an axiological interlude in a normative treatise. It is, however, an axiological interlude which makes perfect sense in its present location, because *Nicomachean Ethics* i finds Aristotle attempting to determine the highest good, or the highest good for human beings, and he has before him a singular candidate for just such a good: namely, the Platonic view of the Good, according to which there is a universal good, a good which, if it exists, is implicated at any time and everywhere goodness occurs, and which, to paraphrase a remark of Plato's in the *Euthyphro*, is that Form whose presence *makes* good things good.[58] As we have seen, on the Platonic view, the Good is implicated in the goodness of good things at least in the sense that it is a *paradigm* of goodness, such that all good things are good by dint of their imitating the Good itself in some measure or other.[59] It is in this way, at least, a cause of the goodness that good things manifest. This is noticeably just how Aristotle introduces his predecessors leading into *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, though, again, without naming names: 'Some used to think that beyond these many good things there is some other good, something good in its own right, which is the cause (αἴτιον) of the goodness of all these good things' (*EN* i 5, 1095a26–28).

[58] *Euthyphro* 6c–e.

[59] More will be said about imitation, but already it is important to note that *contra* Patterson's (1985) otherwise valuable study, an imitation of *x* need not be a *non-x*. While it is true that a photograph of a panting man is not itself panting, a colour photograph of a green vase is itself green.

Accordingly, if it turns out that there is such a good, then it qualifies as a candidate for being the good to be sought in *Nicomachean Ethics* i. After all, Aristotle himself opens the work arguing that all action aims at something good (*EN* i 3, 1094a1–3), and then adds in the second chapter that all action is eventually subordinate to some final good, which is the best good:

> If, then, (i) there is some end in the sphere of our actions which we wish for because of itself and (ii) because of which we wish for other things, and (iii) we do not choose everything because of something else—for, if we do, things will proceed in this way to infinity, so that desire will be empty and futile—then clearly this would be the good, that is, the best good (*τἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ ἄριστον*) (*EN* i 2, 1094a17–21).

Focussing on this best good, he then reasonably asks, 'Will not knowledge (*γνῶσις*) of it have decisive significance with respect to our manner of life?' (*EN* i 2, 1094a22–23). Since we care in our normative reflections about the course our lives should follow, if our respected friends offer a candidate proposal for a guiding principle which can play a central role in determining the direction of our lives, presumably we should investigate their suggestion. Moreover, if it turns out to be as advertised, then we should turn our attention to it. If, by contrast, we determine that there is no such good, either because we find it as described incoherent or otherwise as simply non-existent, then we should return to the good we are seeking having left their suggestion by the wayside. We should then pursue the good as *we* understand it, in our own terms, and as delimited and undergirded as appropriate by our own metaphysical framework.

An investigation of the good promulgated by our predecessors might take any number of directions, but if we think their proposal founders already in its metaphysical presuppositions, we may safely set their view aside on just these grounds. This is a further sense, then, in which the *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 is an axiological interlude: it comprises a brief, concentrated enquiry into the metaphysics of value, holding in abeyance until its end normative questions about how one ought to conduct one's affairs. If we agree that there is such a good as our friends submit, then we will also want to admit that knowledge (*γνῶσις*) of it will be of great moment for the course our lives should take. Again, by contrast, if there is no such good, then any further discussion of it would be for our purposes plainly otiose.

Importantly, if this general characterization of the basic orientation of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 is apt, then there are already consequences for our assessment of Aristotle's own preferred approach to the metaphysics of goodness. After all, he has his own normative and axiological concerns. If there is no such good as the good posited by the Platonic View—perhaps, for instance, because there is no such thing as a non-circumscribed good, or because goodness is

multivalent such that there are many irreducibly distinct kinds of goodness—then, again, there will be ramifications for the possible contours of Aristotle's positive normative theory.[60]

To preview just one possible ramification: if goodness is, as against the Platonic view, non-univocal, and commensurability among goods requires univocity, as Aristotle himself sometimes contends (*Top*. i 15, 107b13–17), then good things will not be readily brought into rational orderings or preference rankings.[61] Fairly plainly, however, this is something Aristotle regularly and rightly, even unavoidably, does in his own normative investigations in *Nicomachean Ethics* i and elsewhere. To be clear, the point of this passing preview is not at present to raise an objection to Aristotle's procedures,[62] but rather to indicate one way in which the axiological interlude of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 shapes and constrains the rest of the work. Just as his rejection of the Platonic view frees him to develop his own axiology, so it constrains the possible directions that axiology may take and with those constraints come still more constraints on the possible contours his own normative theory may take. Aristotle plainly cannot, with justice, first criticize Plato and then presuppose, however tacitly, any of the very features rendered problematic by his own critical postures.

1.4 A View of a View of the Good: Aristotle's Reaction

With just that much spadework, we may reproduce Aristotle's view of the Platonic view in its entirety, as it emerges in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6. We relegate a presentation of the parallel text of *Eudemian Ethics* i 8 to a subsidiary role, not because it is less important—for it is on some points much more important and on other points, if not as important, it nonetheless usefully corrects some impressions *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 might otherwise leave—but primarily because the text of

[60] Here we may readily both agree and disagree with Flashar (2010, 68): 'Aristotle did indeed abolish the independence of practice from theory, but in his hierarchy of values and gradations of being he remains a Platonist to a greater extent than his critique would suggest'. He may be right about the degree to which Aristotle remains a Platonist without also being right about his having abolishing a presumed independence of practice from theory.

[61] This topic will be explored in chapter 9, but already here one should note that this sort of claim is ambiguous, as between (i) it is not the case that every good is commensurable with every other good and (ii) it is not the case that every good is commensurable with some other good.

[62] This issue is explored in detail in chapter 9. Some others are more preemptory in their criticisms of Aristotle. See, for instance, Oates (1963, ix), who prefaces his work *Aristotle and the Problem of Value* by reporting: 'The first step in my investigation was to examine the entire corpus of Aristotle's writings in the effort to identify all the important passages in which he became involved, either explicitly or implicitly, in the question of value or, as I have called it from time to time, the "phenomena of evaluation"…. [T]hese texts have been analyzed and interpreted in order to try to validate the major thesis of the book, namely, that Aristotle when he faced the question of value was frequently inconsistent or even incoherent'.

that chapter is in a miserable state,[63] requiring a good deal of conjectural reconstruction before it may be presented for evaluation.[64]

By contrast, the text of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 is in reasonably good shape. Even so, it contains its own obscurities and exegetical challenges. The translation offered here breaks the text into sections representing its primary organizational divisions, and thus, inevitably, rests upon some controversial decisions about the argumentative structure of the chapter. According to the text as divided, the chapter contains seven primary arguments;[65] although not universally agreed, this number is justified in the discussions to follow. While unavoidably reflecting some disputable decisions, the divisions offered here do reflect the dominant arguments deployed by Aristotle. He begins with some preliminary matters which we have already encountered, and then offers a series of arguments punctuated by some hypothesized rejoinders.

Although prescinding from offering any argument, the preliminary material of the chapter sets the tone in important ways. The following translation divides it into its main argumentative sections for ease of reference:

1.4.1 Preliminary Introduction

> We had presumably better consider the universal <good> and run through the puzzles concerning what is meant by it—even though this sort of investigation is unwelcome to us, because those who introduced the Forms are friends. Yet presumably it would seem the better course to destroy even what is close to us, as something

[63] This circumstance will most likely soon improve, since Christopher Rowe is preparing a new critical edition for the Oxford Classical Texts. He has kindly shared his text in pre-publication state.

[64] The text of *Eudemian Ethics* i 8 differs in three main respects from the presentation of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6. First, where the arguments are more or less directly parallel, the *Eudemian Ethics* is ampliative where the *Nicomachean Ethics i*s telescopic. In these cases, we appeal to the text of the *Eudemian Ethics* for expansion and clarification as appropriate. Second, the discussion of the *Eudemian Ethics* foregrounds the *separation* of Forms, whereas this issue is almost entirely absent in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (on this matter see § 1.1.6). One possible reason for this difference is that the discussion of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 is focussed much more narrowly on the Form of the Good alone, rather than on the Forms as a class, and in particular on the question of its univocity, whereas the issue of separation pertains, in Aristotle's judgement, to all Forms and not merely the Form of the Good (on this see ns. 47–51). Finally, and from a doxographical point of view most intriguingly, the discussion of the *Eudemian Ethics* is much more diagnostic: it offers an appraisal of how and why, in Aristotle's view, Plato went wrong in arriving at his view of goodness, and, in the process locates Plato's putative missteps in his reported *mathematization* of the first principles of ethics. This is once again in keeping with Aristotle's general analysis of the genesis of Plato's theory for Forms, as it is presented in *Metaphysics* A 9 and its partial doublet *Metaphysics* M 5.

[65] This controversy is reflected in the fact that even careful scholars disagree about how many arguments the chapter contains. Joachim (1951, 37–47) finds four, as does Stewart (1892, vol. 1, 70); Grant (1885, vol. 1, 208) identifies four, though not the same four as Stewart's and Joachim's four, while Flashar (1995, 65–69) reads five. Jacquette reconstructs and discusses seven (1998, 321), agreeing with Barney (2008, 294 n. 2), who focusses, though, only on the last.

> necessary for preserving the truth—and all the more so, given that we are philosophers. For though we love them both, piety bids us to honour the truth before our friends (*EN* i 6, 1096a11–17).

Thereafter, the chapter is more or less continuous, striving to exercise the demands of philosophical piety by attacking the Platonic view of the Good on multiple fronts, first by means of three direct arguments and thereafter by considering some proposed Platonic responses. It ends by returning its dominant axiological considerations to some purported normative shortcomings consequent upon Plato's metaphysics of goodness.

The remainder of the translation divides the chapter into its main polemical divisions for ease of reference:

1.4.2 No Forms over the Prior and Posterior

> Those who advanced this view did not produce Ideas for those cases in which they said there was a prior and a posterior and this is the very reason why they did not furnish an Idea in the case of numbers. Yet the good is used meaningfully in the <category of > *what it is* (*τί ἐστι*; *scil.* substance), and in quality and in relative; and what is in its own right, that is, substance, is by nature prior to the relative, for this seems to be an offshoot and a co-incident of being, so that there would be no common Idea over these (*EN* i 6 1096a17–23).

1.4.3 Goods across the Categories

> Further, since good is meant in as many ways as being is meant:[66] in [the category of] what something is [*scil.* substance], for instance god and reason (*νοῦς*); in quality, the virtues (*αἱ ἀρεταί*); in quantity, a fitting amount (*τὸ μέτριον*); in relative, the useful (*τὸ χρήσιμον*); in time, the opportune (*καιρός*); in place, an abode (*δίαιτα*); and other such things <in the other categories>, it is clear that the good cannot be something common, universal, and one (*κοινόν τι καθόλου καὶ ἕν*).

[66] The rendering of Aristotle's phrase *πολλαχῶς λέγεται* into English is tricky. The most common renderings, 'spoken of in many ways' and 'said in many ways' have much to commend them, despite, and perhaps even because of, their artificiality. Still, although conventional, these renderings risk giving the misleading impression that Aristotle is intending a merely linguistic point. The current passage especially makes clear that Aristotle wants to make the point that '…is good' can be meaningfully predicated of items in all the categories, where this registers more than an observation about lexical meaning. See also 100 n. 18.

For if it were, it would be predicated meaningfully not in all of the categories, but rather in one only (*EN* i 6, 1096a23–29).[67]

1.4.4 The Diversity of the Sciences

Further, since among things falling under a single Idea, there is also a single science (ἐπιστήμη), <it follows that if all good things corresponded to a single Idea, goodness>, there would also be some one science of all good things; but as things are, there are many sciences even of things falling under a single category. For instance, concerning the opportune <in the category of time>, in the case of war, < the science is> generalship, while in the case of sickness it is medicine, and concerning the fitting amount <in the category of quantity>, in the case of food <the science is> medicine, while in the case of exercise it is gymnastics (*EN* i 6, 1096a29–35).

1.4.5 Adding 'Itself'

Someone might also be puzzled as to what in the world they mean to be saying <when speaking of> 'Each-thing Itself' (αὐτοέκαστον), since the account of human is one and the same in 'Human Itself' (αὐτο-ανθρώπῳ) and in a human, for insofar as each is human, they differ not at all. If this is so, neither will the <Good Itself and a good thing differ> insofar as each is good. Moreover, the <Good Itself> will not be *more* good by being eternal, since <a white thing> lasting a long time will be none the whiter than one lasting but a day (*EN* i 6, 1096a34–b5).

1.4.6 Relative Praise for the Pythagoreans and Speusippus

The Pythagoreans would seem to have a more persuasive view of this [*scil.* the good], placing the One as they do in the column of good things. What is more, Speusippus seems to have followed their lead here. But let us leave these matters for another discussion (*EN* i 6, 1096b5–8).

[67] Alternatively: 'for then it would be spoken of not in all of the categories, but rather in one only' (οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἐλέγετ' ἐν πάσαις ταῖς κατηγορίαις, ἀλλ' ἐν μιᾷ μόνῃ).

1.4.7 A Platonic Rejoinder Considered and Rejected

A certain dispute concerning what has been said <by us about the good> comes into view, however, because of the fact that the arguments given [by the Platonists] did not concern every good; rather <only> goods pursued and cherished in their own right were spoken of as corresponding to one Form (*καθ' ἓν εἶδος*), whereas those productive of these, or somehow preservative of them or preventative of their contraries, were spoken of <as good> because of these and in a different way.

It is clear, then, that [on the account of the Platonists], good things would be meant in two ways (*διττῶς*): some as good in their own right (*καθ' αὑτά*) and others as good because of these (*διὰ ταῦτα*).

Let us, then, once we have separated them from those which <serve as mere> contributors, investigate whether things good in their own right (*καθ' αὑτά*) are spoken of as corresponding to a single Idea (*κατὰ μίαν ἰδέαν*).

But which sorts of goods should one regard as good in their own right? Or are these things pursued even on their own, as for instance prudence, seeing, certain pleasures, and honours are? For even if we pursue these because of something else, one would still regard them as goods in their own right. Or [do they suppose] that nothing except the Idea [of the Good is good in its own right]? [If so] the result will be that the Form (*τὸ εἶδος*) is pointless (*μάταιον*).

But if these things are good in their own right alongside the Form of the Good], then the account <of goodness> will need to be shown to be the same for all of them, just as the accounts of whiteness in snow and in face cream (*ψιμυθίον*) are the same.[68] But the accounts of goodness as it pertains to honour, intelligence, and pleasure are different and divergent (*ἕτεροι καὶ διαφέροντες*), precisely in the way in which they are good. It is not the case, then, that the good is something common corresponding to a single Idea (*τὸ ἀγαθὸν κοινόν τι κατὰ μία ἰδέαν*) (*EN* i 6, 1096b8–26).

1.4.8 A Conciliatory Concern

But how, then, is goodness spoken of? For it does not seem akin to those things which are homonymous by chance. Is it, then, spoken of

[68] Aristotle is here speaking of a kind of lead (*ψιμυθίον*) used as a pigment for whitening the face; it would have been worn, for instance, by actors on the stage. This word *ψιμυθίον* is usually translated as 'white lead' but that gives a slightly wrong emphasis for Aristotle's example. His point is just that '…is white' applies univocally to snow and to a kind of theatrical make-up.

[like those instances of homonymy] where all things derive from one thing or contribute to one thing? Or is it rather spoken of by analogy? For as sight is in the body, so reason is in the soul, and, in general, so another thing is in something else (*EN* i 6, 1096b26–29).

1.4.9 Normative Considerations Reintroduced

But presumably one should leave these matters aside for now; for speaking accurately concerning them belongs more appropriately to another [branch] of philosophy; likewise regarding the Idea <of the Good>. For even if the good is one and predicated in common,[69] or is something separate, something good itself in its own right (*χωριστὸν αὐτό τι καθ' αὑτό*), it is clear that this would not be achievable in action or able to be acquired by a human being; but in fact that is the sort <of good> now being sought.

Perhaps, though, it might seem better for someone to come to know this [*scil.* the Idea of the Good], with reference to the goods that can be achieved in action or acquired—since by having this paradigm we shall know better those goods which are good for us (*τὰ ἡμῖν ἀγαθά*; *EN* i 6, 1097a2–3) and if we know about these we will be better able to attain them.

While this argument does have a certain amount of plausibility, it would seem to be at variance with the [actual practice of] the sciences. For all sciences, while aiming at some good and attending to its lack, leave knowledge of <this sort of> good by the wayside. And yet if it were such a great benefit, it would be unreasonable for craftsmen to be ignorant of it and not attend to it all.

Moreover, it is hard to figure how a weaver or a carpenter will be benefited in his own craft by knowing this Good itself (*τὸ αὐτὸ τοῦτο ἀγαθόν*), or how someone who has beheld this Idea (*ὁ τὴν ἰδέαν αὐτὴν τεθεαμένος*) will be more versed in generalship or more of a skilled physician. For a doctor apparently does not even consider health in this way [*scil.* abstractly—let alone the Good abstractly], but considers instead the health belonging to a human, or rather, presumably, the health belonging to *this* human, for he treats one human at a time.

Let just this much be said concerning these matters (*EN* i 6, 1096b35–1097a14).

[69] Reading *ἔστιν ἕν τι καὶ κοινῇ κατηγορούμενον ἀγαθὸν* for *ἔστιν ἕν τι τὸ κοινῇ κατηγορούμενον ἀγαθὸν*, as in the OCT, which yields instead 'For even if the good predicated in common is something one'. Probably Aristotle is being careful to distinguish questions of unity from questions of common predication, which would reflect sensitivity to the sort of distinction drawn between features (iii) and (iv) in our presentation of the Platonic View of the Good above, in §§ 1.3 and 1.4.

1.5 The Arguments of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6

We may now present the argumentative spine of Aristotle's view of the Platonic view of the Good. The chapter contains five primary axiological arguments, followed by two normative arguments which serve to return the treatise to its continuous discussion of the highest good.

We develop them in detail in the chapters to follow, sometimes amplifying and sometimes correcting them by reference to discussions elsewhere, most notably those given in the parallel passage of *Eudemian Ethics* i 8, and to a lesser extent, *Magna Moralia* i 1.[70] As we present them, they hew as close to the text as possible, in some cases, though, providing slight expansions intended to tease out their initial force.

1.5.1 A Series of Goods (ASG) (*EN* i 6, 1096a17–23)

1. Where things F_1, $F_2 \ldots F_n$ are related as prior and posterior (*πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον*), there is no Form F-ness set over them.
2. Good things are related as prior and posterior.
3. So, there is no Form Goodness set over good things.

On behalf of (**ASG**-2) Aristotle adverts, at least glancingly, to the theory of categories, thus yielding as an ancillary argument on behalf of the second premiss (**ASG-A**):

1. Beings in the category of substance (*οὐσία*) are called good.
2. Beings in the categories of (a) quality (*ποιός*) and (b) relative (*πρὸς τι*) are called good.
3. Substances (*οὐσίαι*) are prior in nature (*πρότερον τῇ φύσει*) to qualities and relatives.
4. If substances are prior to the other categories of being, and if φ is predicated of substances and beings in the other categories of being, then the φ substances are prior to the φ non-substances.
5. So, good things are related as prior and posterior.

[70] There is considerable dispute about the relation of these two works, in both time and value. For a survey of some of the issues, see Kenny (1978), who holds, controversially, that the *EE* is both later and better than the *EN* (cf. Irwin (1980)). Briefly, the present work proceeds on the assumptions that the *EE* is earlier but not therefore worse than the *EN*, even though the *EN* represents a more mature phase of Aristotle's ethical thinking. They seem to have been produced for different audiences, with the result that the *EN* is written in a less technical style and thus omits some forms of wanted technical argumentation where the *EE* is more forthcoming. See also n. 64.

As we will see in chapter 3, both of these arguments, despite their initial brevity, prove remarkably complex.

1.5.2 Goods Across the Categories (GAC) (*EN* i 6, 1096a23–29)

The second argument relies more directly and fully on the doctrine of the categories, and has reasonably been regarded by some scholars as the pre-eminent argument of the chapter.[71] In its briefest form, this passage suggests an arrestingly simple argument (**GAC-Si**):

1. Goodness is meant in many ways (λέγεται πολλαχῶς) if, and only if, being is meant in many ways (λέγεται πολλαχῶς).
2. Being is meant in many ways (λέγεται πολλαχῶς; *Met*. 1003a33–34).
3. Hence, goodness is meant in many ways (λέγεται πολλαχῶς).

The basic idea of this argument is plain enough: the homonymy of goodness tracks the homonymy of being. Since being is meant in many ways, so too, then, must the good be homonymous.

Needless to say, there is plenty of room for questioning each of these premisses. When we scrutinize the passage, however, we find Aristotle arguing more directly for a negative thesis than for a positive one. The following expanded argument receives most attention in this section of text (**GAC-Ex**):

1. There are 10 categories of being (or, for that matter, there are *n* categories of being, where $n > 1$).
2. If (1), there are irreducibly distinct kinds of beings.
3. So, there are irreducibly distinct kinds of beings.
4. It is possible to predicate goodness of items in these various categories. (One may say, that is, 'x in C_1 is good' and 'y in C_2 is good' and 'z in C_3 is good' and so on for the *n* categories of being).
5. If goodness were univocal, it would not be possible to predicate goodness across the categories in this way. (For if goodness were something universal, common, and single, 'it would not be spoken of in all the categories, but in one only'; *EN* i 6, 1096a28–29).
6. Hence, goodness is not univocal.

One crucial question concerns (**GAC-Ex-5**) in this expanded version of the argument: why should bare transcategorial predication be sufficient for

[71] So Ackrill (1972). See also MacDonald (1989).

non-univocity? Or is there something more standing behind this premiss, generating non-univocity indirectly?

These and like questions are pursued in chapter 4.

1.5.3 The Diversity of the Sciences (DS) (*EN* i 6, 1096a29–34)

(1) Every science (ἐπιστήμη) is set over a single, non-disjunctive domain Δ.
(2) Hence, if goodness is univocal, there is a single, non-disjunctive domain Δ of good things.
(3) If there were a single, non-disjunctive domain Δ of good things, goodness would not be meant differently intra-categorially.
(4) A survey of the sciences reveals that in fact goodness is meant differently even intra-categorially.
(5) Hence, there is no single, non-disjunctive domain Δ of good things.
(6) Hence, goodness is not univocal.
(7) Hence, there is no science (ἐπιστήμη) of the good.
(8) Hence, since there is a Form of the Good only if there is a (possible?) science (ἐπιστήμη) of the good, there is no Form of the Good.

This argument is tricky: it is difficult to state in a non-question begging way. Still, the general source of Aristotle's complaint seems clear enough, as rooted in some facts about scientific practice. Roughly, if goodness were as projected by the Platonic View, we would not expect to find a variety of different sciences pertaining to the goods as they show up even within various categories. Yet good things even within the category of time, a category evidently chosen more or less randomly, already exhibit a diversity of scientific treatments. Generalship treats the good in the category of time where warfare is concerned, while medicine treats the good where health is concerned. That these are manifestly different sciences already reflects a diversity of goods, even intra-categorially. Thus, there being no single domain Δ of good things even within a category, there is plainly no super science of all good things, across all the categories of being.

This argument is examined in detail in chapter 5.

1.5.4 Adding 'Itself' (AI) (*EN* i 6, 1096a34–1096b5)

The argument of this passage is difficult to bring into sharp focus; it might be developed in several different ways. Indeed, there may be several arguments indicated, each requiring amplification. One possible formulation takes the gist of the complaint, as a first approximation, to be concerned with paradeigmatism:

1. For each Form φ, the Platonists append 'itself', yielding 'the φ-itself' in order to mark off φ as paradigmatically φ.
2. Adding 'itself' to 'φ' yields something paradigmatically φ only if it (a) adds something distinctive to being-φ or (b) renders φ more explanatorily efficacious by rendering it eternal.
3. Not (2a): Adding 'itself' to 'φ' adds nothing distinctive to being-φ, since, on the contrary, 'the account of human is one and the same in "Human Itself" ($\alpha\dot{\upsilon}\tau o$-$\alpha\nu\theta\rho\dot{\omega}\pi\omega$) and in human, for insofar as each is human, they differ not at all' (*EN* i 6, 1096b1–2).
4. Not (2b): Adding 'Itself' to 'φ' adds nothing by rendering φ eternal, since 'the <Good Itself> will not be *more* good by being eternal, since <a white thing> lasting a long time will be no whiter than one lasting but a day' (*EN* i 6, 1096b3–5).

There is much to contest in this reconstruction, both as a reconstruction, and, on the assumption that it captures the main purport of Aristotle's complaint, as an effective criticism of Platonic paradeigmatism. These issues provide the point of departure for chapter 6.[72]

1.5.5 An Argument from the Plurality of Intrinsic Goods (IG) (*EN* i 6, 1096b8–26)

This long stretch of text portrays itself not as a direct argument against the Platonic View of the Good, but rather as a crushing retort to an intelligent response put into the mouth of the Platonists. The proffered response is apparently imagined to be somewhat concessive on the part of the Platonists: they are represented as agreeing, at least implicitly, that goodness, if not multiply meant, is meant in at least two ways ($\delta\iota\tau\tau\hat{\omega}\varsigma$; *EN* i 6, 1096b13): there are things good in their own right ($\kappa\alpha\theta'$ $\alpha\dot{\upsilon}\tau\acute{\alpha}$) and things in one way or another conducive to things good in their own right, either by producing them, or preserving them, or by removing impediments lying opposed to them ($\tau\grave{\alpha}$ $\delta\grave{\epsilon}$ $\pi o\iota\eta\tau\iota\kappa\grave{\alpha}$ $\tau o\acute{\upsilon}\tau\omega\nu$ $\mathring{\eta}$ $\varphi\upsilon\lambda\alpha\kappa\tau\iota\kappa\acute{\alpha}$ $\pi\omega\varsigma$ $\mathring{\eta}$ $\tau\hat{\omega}\nu$ $\grave{\epsilon}\nu\alpha\nu\tau\acute{\iota}\omega\nu$ $\kappa\omega\lambda\upsilon\tau\iota\kappa\acute{\alpha}$; *EN* i 6, 1196b11–12). The idea, put in these terms, is that the Platonists had only ever envisaged a single Form for things good in their own right, for per se, or as we shall say, *intrinsic goods*—though that notion itself will need to be specified with care.[73] At least these sorts of goods qualify as univocally good because they are all 'such as to be pursued and loved

[72] See also § 2.3.1 for a discussion of Eustratius's distinctive take on the argument.
[73] See § 7.2 and n. 265 for a discussion of the contrast between intrinsic and non-intrinsic goods to which Aristotle here appeals.

for themselves or in their own right' (*τὰ καθ' αὑτὰ διωκόμενα καὶ ἀγαπώμενα*; *EN* i 6, 1096b10–11).

As we will see,[74] in proceeding this way, Aristotle is here implicitly appealing to his own doctrine of core-dependent homonymy, in effect offering the Platonists a kind of rejoinder founded in his own metaphysical apparatus.[75] Whether or not this is a hygienic way of engaging them, Aristotle offers a riposte to their rejoinder, one with far-reaching consequences for his own axiology and normative theory. In outline, Aristotle's argument takes the form of a dilemma concerning Intrinsic Goods (**IG**):

1. Either (a) there are many intrinsic goods, or (b) there is one only, viz. the Form of the Good.
2. If (IG-1b), then the notion of intrinsic goodness will play no role and the Form of the Good will be pointless.
3. If (IG-1a), then the accounts of '…is good' as it applies across the range of intrinsic goods will be either (i) univocal or (ii) homonymous as regards that range of good things.
4. Not (IG-1b), because the accounts of '…is good' as it applies to these sundry intrinsic goods differ 'precisely in the way in which they are good' (*οἱ λόγοι ταύτῃ ᾗ ἀγαθά*; *EN* 1096b24–25).
5. So, if (IG-1a), then goodness will be homonymous across the range of intrinsic goods, and so there will be no univocal Form of the Good.
6. So, either (a) goodness is homonymous and there is no univocal Form of the Good, or (b) the Form of the Good is pointless.

Here too there is some obscurity about the precise contours of Aristotle's argument, but it seems clear that he means to saddle the Platonists with an unpalatable set of alternatives.

One question about this strategy: does it prove too much, if it proves anything at all? That is, Aristotle here seems to embrace a very fine-grained conception of the multivocity of goodness, so much so, in fact, that it may threaten his own normative procedures. This question will be taken up in two phases, in chapter 7.

1.5.6 The Pointlessness of the Form of the Good (PFG) (*EN* i 6, 1096b35–1097a13)

Aristotle closes out the chapter by reintroducing some normative considerations pertinent to the Platonic view of the good. The closing section is not, however,

[74] See § 7.2.

[75] The matter is more complicated, however, since there is some evidence that at least one other member of the Academy, Speusippus, had also embraced the apparatus of homonymy. See Barnes (1971). In the extant writings of Plato, however, the word 'homonymy' appears only in its non-technical sense of 'namesake'. See Shields (1999) for a discussion of this evidence.

narrowly normative in charter: Aristotle offers a number of contentions pertinent to the relation of the axiological and normative features of the Platonic view of the Good to one another, and so also, by implication, to his own as well.

He begins by conceding, counterfactually from his perspective, that the good is something, as the Platonic view maintains, separate and good itself in its own right (*χωριστὸν αὐτό τι καθ' αὑτό*; *EN* i 6, 1096b32–34). He then maintains that such a good would be useless, because unattainable by a human being, and so would be irrelevant to the normative enterprise in which he is now engaged.

Strikingly, he offers the Platonist precisely the rejoinder one would expect, given their view: the Good envisaged is a paradigm (*παράδειγμα*) and could serve as a guide for human conduct. More exactly, if our goal is to attain some circumscribed goods, those things which are good *for us* (*τὰ ἡμῖν ἀγαθά*; *EN* i 6, 1097a2–3), then we can only be assisted in our efforts by paradeigmatism: if we know, for instance, what makes these goods good, then we will be able to identify them more readily; and if we can identify them more readily, we will then also more readily attain them. So, still on the assumption that there is a separate good serving as a paradigm, and adding to this the natural thought that goods instrumental to this derive their goodness from it, knowledge of the Good can only help us in our quest to attain the goods we seek.

Aristotle initially accords this response the respect it merits: he concedes that it is at least initially persuasive (*πιθανότης*; *EN* i 6, 1097a3).[76] But he then proceeds to reject it on the grounds that it is at variance with the actual conduct of the sciences and crafts. If the Good really did exist, and if it really were a paradigm, then we would expect those pursuing things which are good for us, like doctors and carpenters, to pay it heed. As things are, however, they do not. What is more, contends Aristotle still more strongly, they are right to proceed just as they do; for it is not at all clear what consideration of so abstruse a principle could offer them. Thus, even if indulgently considered to exist as a paradigm of goodness, the Form of the Good, from the standpoint of practical rationality, would be otiose.

Taking that altogether, in the closing normative section we find Aristotle offering an argument along the following lines (**PI**):

1. A separate, non-circumscribed good would be useful to the attainment of the good we seek, namely our good, the good for human beings, only if it could be known in such a way that it would serve as a useful paradigm of goodness.
2. If such a good were available as a paradigm, then (a) one would expect scientists and craftsmen to be mindful of it, and (b) one could readily imagine how the sciences and crafts could avail themselves of their (prospective) knowledge of it.

[76] See § 8.1 for a discussion of the concession.

3. In fact, neither (PI-2a) nor (PI-2b) obtains: the sciences in fact do not proceed with a view to any such paradigm, and there is no clear reason to suppose that they should or, indeed, could.
4. Hence, a conjectured separate, non-circumscribed good would not be useful to the attainment of the circumscribed good we seek, namely the good *for us*.

The argument plainly reintroduces normative considerations, and also seeks to exploit a distinction between absolute and circumscribed goodness.

So construed, however, the argument introduces a number of complications, some resulting from its proceeding on two tiers simultaneously. On one level, it seems a straightforward appeal to the actual practices of the sciences, such that Aristotle's point might be construed as an appeal to the *phainomena*: if we observe how, for instance, doctors doctor, we do not notice them adverting in their practice to the Form of the Good—at all. Yes, they seek the good for us (*τὰ ἡμῖν ἀγαθά*; *EN* i 6, 1097a2–3); but they do not appear to be guided, even implicitly, by attending to something called the Good Itself.

At the same time, there is another, modal level: he contends that even on the assumption of the existence of a separated Good (*χωριστὸν αὐτό τι καθ' αὑτό*; *EN* i 6, 1096b33), 'it would not be achievable in action or able to be acquired by a human being' (*EN* i 6, 1086b33–34). Here the stakes are higher, since the argument rests not merely on an appeal to the *phainomena*, no matter how compelling such an appeal might be, but a claim to the effect that a separated Good would be permanently unattainable by human beings. This claim raises the bar of proof considerably, since to secure it Aristotle will need to specify some reasonable conditions of attainment and then explain why human beings are precluded from reaching it. Here it is noteworthy that he himself will later, in another context, allow that human beings can and should aim at contemplating the highest objects available to them, evidently including centrally god, as their highest end (*EN* x 7, 1177a19–21; cf. *Met*. xii 7 and 9).[77]

We consider these and related complications in chapter 8.[78]

1.6 Concluding Considerations

Aristotle's criticisms of the Platonic View of the Good are variegated and nuanced, though also, unfortunately, very tersely stated. Assessing them involves first

[77] On Aristotle's use of the verb 'to contemplate' (*θεωρεῖν*) in this connection see Eriksen (1976) and Roochnik (2009).

[78] The coming chapters investigate these arguments, which form the spine of this book, with the result that the text makes frequent reference to them in various cross-references.

recovering and expanding them, though this is a task already fraught with hermeneutical complexity and controversy. There is a temptation, indulged too often in the long tradition of considering these texts, to read Aristotle's arguments through the lens of a presumed eventual evaluation of their final force. Those antecedently sympathetic to Plato are apt to find them wanting; those confident of Aristotle's critical success tend to find them near enough devastating.

While it would be churlish to suggest that all exegetes have succumbed to temptations of these sorts, one can detect an unusual level of refracted reading among the scholars and philosophers who have engaged Aristotle's critical texts. It behoves us, then, insofar as we may be able, to avoid this temptation by holding in abeyance our own eventual appraisal of Aristotle's arguments; we should bring the arguments themselves into focus without prejudging their ultimate force. To the extent that we may succeed in doing so, and no further, we will be in a position to determine whether the Platonic View remains a viable option after Aristotle's onslaught.

As we have already intimated, and as we will see in detail in the next chapter, opinions around this question divide rather sharply.

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2
Two Views of a View of a View of the Good

2.1 Two Classes?

The compressed arguments of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 directed against the Platonic view of the Good have been variously received—so variously, in fact, that they serve as a virtual Rorschach test for the philosophical predilections of Aristotle's readers. Indeed, this chapter of the *Nicomachean Ethics* has occasioned so remarkably divergent a set of responses that it has few rivals within the entire Aristotelian corpus. Even a brief and selective review of its reception history uncovers an alarming degree of scholarly disarray extending to its most basic tenets; and that does not yet begin to address the more tangled critical question of their defensibility, a topic which divides Aristotle's readers still more markedly. Some scholars find its arguments utterly devastating, understanding them to refute the Platonic view of the good decisively and without room for any manner of retort; others, at the other end of the spectrum, regard Aristotle's arguments as woefully inadequate, even pathetic, as jejune attempts to refute a view the lineaments of which eluded Aristotle altogether. Some wonder what Aristotle can possibly intend, since the view recounted and rejected can be seen to be, upon even a moment's reflection, notional variants of his own conception of the highest good. If that is so, then the best that can be said of Aristotle's invective is that it in the end serves only to cut his own legs out from under him. Still others read the chapter and are simply baffled by the entire affair.

Scholarly consensus is nowhere in the offing. Instead, we find ourselves confronted with this range of reactions to Aristotle's arguments: celebrations of a crowning victory, pious gratitude, caustic disparagement, disdain, dismayed disbelief, utter bafflement. No one seems to think of Aristotle's arguments as effectively a middling outing engaging a distinctive philosophical position, as having perhaps only a moderate success, landing a few blows requiring thoughtful rejoinders but surely not toppling the edifice of Platonic philosophy in a single go. On the contrary, surveying the range of responses to Aristotle's arguments is almost enough to lend credence to Coleridge's glum adage: 'Every man is born an Aristotelian, or a Platonist. I do not think it is possible that any one born an Aristotelian can become a Platonist; and I am sure no born Platonist can change

into an Aristotelian. There are the two classes of men, besides which it is next to impossible to conceive a third'.[1]

Coleridge's taxonomizing notwithstanding, we may make it our goal to forge a third class, of all humans irrespective of gender, a class of those willing to review Aristotle's arguments dispassionately and follow them where they lead, if they lead anywhere at all. Do the arguments undermine the Platonic View of the Good or do they not?

2.2 Seven Questions about Aristotle's Criticisms of the Form of the Good

We will not so much as approach this goal if we do not first become clearer about a nexus of interlocking questions pertaining to Aristotle's axiology and its relation to the theory he criticizes in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6. These questions may be put easily and briefly, but we discover straightaway when reflecting on them that they intersect in ways making it impossible to answer them seriatim. The questions we must address include at least these seven:

- First, what is the view under attack? What are its precise commitments? Can those commitments in fact be discerned from the presentation of it given by Aristotle?
- Second, what are Aristotle's objections to this view? Are there several or only one? If there are several, is some one of them dominant?
- Third, what are Aristotle's critical arguments? How are they best expressed and developed in a manner in keeping with their expression in the text?

There follow three comparatively evaluative questions:

- Fourth, do Aristotle's arguments fairly and accurately represent the main commitments of the Platonic View of the Good they assail? Or do they set up an unnecessarily feeble position, introduced primarily to offer a foil to his own preferred axiology?
- Fifth, however that may be, are Aristotle's critical arguments compelling, as construed against the position he recounts? So, for instance, if we are

[1] Coleridge (1851, 100–101). Indeed, some of the more exuberant advocates of Aristotle's position in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 seem inclined to embrace the remark made by the Anglican cleric and moral philosopher Frederick Denison Maurice to Edward Strachey, in response to the question whether he should prefer to attend the (ostensibly) Platonist Cambridge or the (avowedly) Aristotelian Oxford. As reported by Strachey, when he quoted Coleridge's adage to him, Maurice remained unimpressed Maurice, 1884, 206–207): 'All little children are Platonists', he replied, 'and it is their education which makes men Aristotelians'.

antecedently attracted to the view that goodness is univocal, should we—must we—abandon our views in favour of something more in line with Aristotle's preferred axiology?

- Sixth, whether compelling or not, do Aristotle's critical arguments have consequences for his own metaphysics of goodness? More to the point, do they have unwelcome implications for his own axiological commitments? If so, to what degree, if any, do these implications place constraints on his normative theory? For instance, to preview these issues only briefly, would a rejection of the univocity of goodness create difficulties for the form of commensurability of good things Aristotle seems to presuppose in his positive normative theory?[2]

Finally, there is a question about the degree to which the disagreement between Plato and Aristotle attains anything beyond an antiquarian interest.

- Seventh, do Aristotle's arguments have implications for our own understanding of the metaphysics of goodness? He advances a view which has some obvious modern resonances, in some cases arguing for positions that some take for granted and others, after reflecting overtly on their tenability, accept as inescapable. Should we embrace his approach to goodness and its implications for our own preferred normative theory?[3]

Needless to say, these questions commend still other questions, some of which themselves have implications for how we are to understand our original questions, again with the result that one cannot hope merely to march through them one following the other. For instance, how we approach the first, concerning the exact contours of the view under assault, will be conditioned in part by what we conclude about the fourth, probing the precise character of Aristotle's critical arguments. Then too, when we think about the fourth question by reflecting on Aristotle's formulations of his arguments, we must proceed with an eye on the first, which queries the commitments of the view under scrutiny, as well as on the sixth, about the final value of Aristotle's critical arguments. As we proceed to

[2] This is a major contention of Oates (1963). We take up this issue in chapter 9.

[3] Even in posing this question I find myself in rather stark disagreement with Allan (1963, 273): 'In both versions of his Ethics Aristotle engages near the beginning in a criticism both of a Platonic Idea of the Good (i.e. of a transcendent instance and pattern of good, which actively infuses goodness into other things) and of a universal concept of goodness; both are dismissed as having no direct or indirect application to political science, even if their existence should be granted (*Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, 1096 a 11 foll.; *Eudemian Ethics* i 8, 1217 a 18 foll.) What, you may wish to know, can be secured at this late date from a fresh examination of these passages? and if it is true that every enquiry aims at some good, I am obliged to try to answer. The gain will necessarily be one of historical understanding rather than of insight into living philosophical problems…'. The answer Allan finds himself obliged to give is perplexing and unmotivated—and utterly alien to the aspirations animating the current study.

answer any one of them we see straightaway that these questions prove to be intricately interlacing.

This last result already testifies to the depth and nuance of the axiological disputes and controversies engaged by the philosophers associated with Plato's Academy. One further benefit of reviewing these issues in their original context is that we are more likely to make progress in our own axiological disputes by focussing, as Plato and Aristotle did, on the inherently and inescapably metaphysical character of the questions pertinent to this area of value theory. To proceed otherwise is to engage axiology unmoored.

Inevitably some—or perhaps all—of these conclusions will prove controversial; they will most likely in any event occasion both scholarly and philosophical dissent among those who may care to consider them carefully. Needless to say, these conclusions will prove only as credible as the detailed arguments marshalled on their behalf in the pages that follow. This is welcome to the extent that these discussions may accordingly add, however humbly, to the ongoing conversation about an Academic dispute which has never really left the Academy, and which each generation must, urgently, rejoin in its own idiom.[4]

2.3 The Reception of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6

Like others of its kind, the academic dispute about goodness inaugurated in the Academy has remained with us through the commentary tradition down to the present day.[5] Presumably this is in part because the issues this dispute engages are deep, multifaceted, sometimes even seemingly intractable. There are other

[4] This review is equally motivated by a desire to begin to realize the scholarly *desideratum* articulated by Rapp, King, and Hartung , who, after providing a brief overview of the reception of Aristotelianism in the nineteenth century, observe (2018, 5): 'It is amazing that Aristotle's philosophy, which already substantially formed the intellectual world in the Middle Ages and Early Modern period up to the eighteenth century, would experience such intense reception yet again in the nineteenth century. It is a desideratum of future research to analyse this fact with a view to the historical differences between these very different phases of Aristotle reception'.

[5] In speaking of the commentary tradition, I mean to include not only the Greek commentary tradition but also the Latin tradition, and also those commentaries written in modern languages. For whatever reason, the Greek commentary tradition is thin where the *Nicomachean Ethics* is concerned. There is only the incomplete work of Aspasius (fl. first half of the second century AD), *In Ethica Nicomachea Quae Supersunt Commentaria* (Heylbut, 1889). Alexander of Aphrodisias (fl. late second to early third century AD) produced a set of *Ethical Problems*, which take their cues from the *Nicomachean Ethics*, but do not constitute a commentary and, more to the point, do not engage the axiological questions of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6—even though Alexander does evince a crisp knowledge of issues pertaining to univocity and homonymy (esp. in Problem 8). There is a similar dearth in the Arabic tradition, a situation instructively investigated by Dunlop, in Akasoy and Fidora (2005). Although Aristotle was known in some measure through Boethius and Cicero in the Latin West, the situation is similar until things pick up a lot in the thirteenth century, with the introduction of Aristotle's works to northern and western Europe in the twelfth century in increasingly reliable Latin translations. In this period, we begin to have original commentaries and also, thanks to the good offices of Roger Grosseteste, some reactions to the medieval Greek commentaries written by Eustratius

reasons as well: owing to the opacity and extreme compression of Aristotle's presentation of his arguments in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, there are even disputes about what the dispute before us is about. Indeed, one need only look to the commentary tradition to appreciate that much of the voluminous discussion occasioned by the brief text of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 has been at cross purposes with itself. Exegetes, commentators, and philosophers (sometimes they are the same, sometimes not) have found the chapter endlessly fascinating, and have not shied away from hazarding answers to some or all of the seven questions tendered above. It is true that not many have addressed them all, though at least some have been assayed by many.[6] Without attempting to present the *status quaestionis*—perhaps in any case we witness more *ambages* than *status* in this area—it serves to survey some leading approaches to the dispute.

We learn two things from doing so: (i) Aristotle's readers divide rather sharply regarding the defensibility of his contentions and (ii) evaluative disagreements in this domain regularly turn on prior disagreements concerning what Aristotle actually contends—since there is widespread disagreement at the basic expositional level, it turns out that Aristotle's philosophical critics very often argue at cross purposes. That is to say, then, that some who think that Aristotle fails rather miserably may not in the end disagree with those who celebrate his triumph, because they turn out in fact to be evaluating altogether distinct claims. For this reason, our own approach to the commentary tradition must be measured.

To appreciate the situation we have inherited, we may consider primarily two representative interpretations, owing to different periods in the history of the reception of Aristotle's arguments, one trenchantly negative and one warmly appreciative, namely those of Eustratius (*c.*1150–1120), a Byzantine philosopher and the Metropolitan Bishop of Nicaea, author of a spirited Byzantine commentary on *Nicomachean Ethics* i and vi, as well as a commentary on *Posterior Analytics* ii, both of which were translated into Latin and so known by authors in the Latin West, and those of Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), a Catholic Aristotelian of the thirteenth century, author of a series of commentaries on Aristotle's works, many of which were during his lifetime first entering the Latin West, including, centrally for our purposes, a full commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Finally, we bring the discussion briefly into the last century or so, in order to illustrate that the passage of time has not brought any greater unanimity to Aristotle's readership. Quite the contrary, as we shall see.

of Nicaea, Michael of Ephesus, and an anonymous author in Constantinople. For Grosseteste's work as a translator and transmitter, see Nederman (1989), Bejczy (2008), and Jenkins and Barber (2009).

[6] Some modern studies with bearing on our questions include: Ackrill (1972), MacDonald (1989), Brakas (1998), Brüllmann (2011), Broadie and Rowe (2002), Gauthier and Jolif (1959), Hardie (1965), Kosman (1968), Oates (1963), Lear (2004), Vranas (2005), Wieland (1975), Williams (1962), and Santas (1989) and (2010).

2.3.1 A Committed Byzantine Platonist: Eustratius

For reasons which are somewhat hard to fathom, the Greek commentary tradition after Aspasius, who left us the first surviving commentary on Aristotle and the only ancient commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*,[7] mainly ignored Aristotle's ethical writings,[8] primarily in favour of his *Categories*, *Physics*, and *Metaphysics*. The same holds true of the Arabic tradition. It is not until Eustratius, the Metropolitan Bishop of Constantinople, in the Byzantine era, active in the early twelfth century, that we have a full treatment of any part work. Even then, Eustratius offers a commentary on only two books, namely *Nicomachean Ethics* i and vi.[9] These are, though, valuable contributions: Eustratius is careful and detailed, but also highly critical, writing from a Neoplatonic angle. Perhaps because of his own orientations, Eustratius begins his commentary with a workmanlike summary of Plato's conception of the Good; he wishes, fairly enough, to make explicit the view he understands Plato to hold and Aristotle to attack.[10]

[7] We set aside, then, the only dedicated commentary from antiquity, which is also the first surviving commentary on any work of Aristotle's, namely the commentary of Aspasius dated to the first third or so of the second century AD. This work, *In Eth. Nic. Quae Supersunt Commentaria Eth*., is a bit unadventurous, as it is mainly periphrastic and digressive rather than evaluative, and in any case has a lacuna, rightly flagged by Konstan (2006, 190 n. 37), precisely in the middle of his discussion of *EN* i 6. It is worth observing all the same that Aspasius, who shows himself to be familiar with the works of Plato, citing the *Republic* twice (*In Eth. Nic. Quae Supersunt Commentaria* 114, 23; 54, 23; 84, 23), and the *Theaetetus*, *Laches*, and *Apology* once each by name (*In Eth. Nic. Quae Supersunt Commentaria* 9, 29; 46, 7; 117, 4), unselfconsciously, and without comment, takes Aristotle's target to be Plato himself. As a brief summary: although he has a good sense about the individual arguments and appreciates that they are so brief as not to be free-standing, Aspasius nevertheless finds them successful in their aims. There is one way in which our own findings will differ markedly from his: he identifies the root problem in the Platonist procedure to be separation (10, 14). On the other hand, he grasps that the discussion is more than a digression, pointing out (though not quite in this language) that the discussion ends by returning from an axiological consideration to a more limited focus on a circumscribed good, namely, the good for human beings (15, 1). Several of his theses, though left under-supported, will prove to be exactly right; others prove more difficult to accept.

[8] After Aspasius, there is no commentary written in Greek until the twelfth century, and so, then, no commentary during the fertile period 200–600 AD, when Alexander, Simplicius, Philoponus, and others produced monumental commentaries on others among Aristotle's works. Although not an exception, there is one work of relevance to mention, namely Alexander's *Ethical Problems*, which is a discussion of a set of thirty problems rather than anything approaching a commentary, though it does contain some modest exegesis of Aristotelian texts and brief explications of Aristotelian doctrine. For a discussion of this situation see Sharples (1990). He does not mention Plato in this work at all, though he refers to him very freely elsewhere, especially in his *Comm. in Aris. Met.*

[9] One might at first conjecture that the other books of his commentary are lost; but there seems to be no record of them at all. Ierodiakonou plausibly suggests that his decision was deliberate (2010, 57): 'What we have of his work as a commentator, apart from his work on the second book of the *Posterior Analytics*, are his comments on the first and sixth books of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. It may be that in the case of the *Nicomachean Ethics* the reason why he chose to comment on these particular books was that at the time there were available in Byzantium commentaries on the other books by anonymous authors and by Michael of Ephesus, another member of the Comnena circle'.

[10] Eustratius was a known an influential critic, widely respected, as Aertsen (2012, 70) rightly notes: 'The medieval conception of the good had an anti-Platonic origin, insofar as it originated in Aristotle's criticism of Plato. One could wonder whether Aristotle's account does justice to the Platonic metaphysics of the good, when, right at the beginning of his discussion (1096a11), he takes the Idea of

Although we have tried to follow his good example in offering an abbreviated list of our own, for precisely the same reason,[11] it becomes clear on a moment's reflection that our view of Plato's view of the Good diverges from that of Eustratius in terms of idiom and emphasis, to say the very least—though they may be closer beneath the surface than that would suggest. In any event, it is instructive to survey his list, inasmuch as doing so serves to illustrate the ways in which each philosopher's understanding of the target of Aristotle's polemic colours any eventual appraisal of its ultimate success.

Eustratius ascribes the following theses to Plato (*in Nic. Eth.* 40, 4–17). The Good is: (i) the transcendent source of all things; (ii) the One; (iii) ineffable (ἄρρητον); (iv) something surpassing all things to an unlimited degree; (v) in itself non-discursive; (vi) super-substantial; (vii) something flowing forth into all good things, without proceeding from itself and without diminution to itself; (viii) something which causes all good things to exist, by dint of its own goodness; (ix) something which causes good things to be and to remain good without so willing, and without desire or deliberation, just as the sun, as essentially luminous, illuminates all before it by its own nature without seeking to do so; (x) the goal and end of all deliberative motion; (xi) what completes all things; and (xii) that which renders all good things good by being their end.

Armed with this understanding of the target view, Eustratius goes to work first recounting and then working to defang Aristotle's criticisms. Although plainly partisan in this way, his recapitulation of Aristotle's critical arguments proceeds with an admirable scholarly detachment.[12] He treats the first argument, concerning Forms over series (**ASG**) (*EN* i 6, 1096a17–23), as a simple argument relying on a lemma endorsed by the Platonists themselves 'in cases in which there are a first and a posterior, in these cases there is no idea' (in *Nic. Eth.* 43, 2–3;

the Good as a universal good (*to katholou*), which, as a genus, is univocally said of all good things. Several medieval commentators of the Ethics adopted a critical attitude towards Aristotle's critique. They had no access to the work *The Republic*, in which Plato explains the Form of the Good, but could dispose of another source. Because of a particularity of the medieval reception of the Ethics, they were familiar with the commentary of a marked critic of Aristotle. The first complete Latin translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1246/1247) was drawn up by Robert Grosseteste, who at the same time translated a corpus of Greek commentaries on this work. Part of this corpus was the commentary on the first book, composed by the Byzantine scholar Eustratius of Nicea (beginning of the twelfth century). This commentary contains a critique of Aristotle's critique, clearly inspired by Neoplatonism'. See also Steel (2002) and (2005). Giocarnis (1964, 164–166) conjectures with some plausibility that when Bonaventure takes the side of an unnamed commentator whom he takes to have shown the worthlessness of Aristotle's arguments against Plato in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, it is Eustratius whom he has in mind: Aristotle, he reports, attacks Plato's conception of the good especially, 'also in the *Ethics*, where he says that the highest good cannot be an Idea. His reasons are worthless, and the commentator has dismissed them'. (…*in Ethics, ubi dicit, quod summum bonum non potest esse idea. Et nihil valent rationes suae, et commentator solvit*' (*In Hexaemeron*, Collatio VI, 360–361).

[11] See § 1.2.

[12] Steel (2005, 8) appreciates the partisan character of Eustratius's commentary, even if understating the degree to which he takes seriously the force of Aristotle's criticisms: 'One easily understands the puzzlement and the indignation of such Neoplatonic commentators of Aristotle as Eustratius when they read this superficial critique of Plato's doctrine of the good'.

ἐν οἷς τὸ πρῶτον καὶ ὕστερον, ἐν τούτοις ἰδέα οὐκ ἔστιν). He accepts, that is, Aristotle's ascription of the premiss to the Platonists themselves. Hence, he understands Aristotle as offering the following argument, the first premiss of which he accepts as true: (i) Where individuals are arranged in a series of prior and posterior, there is no Form over those individuals; (ii) good things are so arranged; so, (iii) there is no Form over good things. In so speaking, he approximates, if in a slightly different idiom, our own formulation as given in (**ASG**).[13]

His understanding of the notion of the series is, however, alien to our initial understanding. He thinks the ascription Aristotle makes to the Platonists regarding Forms over any series is best understood as a point about species under a genus. In the case of species membership, Eustratius suggests, all individuals participate in a species uniformly (or perhaps more cumbersomely 'as arranged in a row'; ὁμοταγῶς). Nothing, for instance, is more or less a sparrow; all sparrows are, so to speak, arranged in a flat line in terms of their being sparrows, all arrayed equally beneath some species, *sparrow*, which is itself part of a flat line of species arrayed under a superordinate genus, *birds*, perhaps. This sort of arrangement does not obtain in the case of numbers, he maintains; numbers are vertical rather than horizontal, in the sense that no number is essentially like any other number, at least not as each sparrow is like every other sparrow in terms of its essential definition. For this reason, then, Eustratius is pleased to grant Aristotle the first premiss of his anti-Platonic argument, allowing, then, that nothing arranged in a series merits a Form.[14]

By contrast, he takes strong exception to the second premiss, that good things are arranged as numbers are arranged. He understands Aristotle to be offering this premiss effectively as an analogical extension of an unstable sort. In this way, like Aspasius before him,[15] he understands Aristotle's argument to be relying crucially on the categorial argument which follows. In fact, he does Aspasius—and even Aristotle himself—one better, by expanding on the point he takes the second

[13] See § 1.5.1.

[14] He agrees with the first simple rendering we have offered in § 1.5. But see §§ 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 for greater development.

[15] He begins, after an oddly and intrusively placed lemma: 'The argument, speaking comprehensively, proceeds in this way: in cases where there is a prior and a posterior, there is not, ever, an Idea of these. In order to support the contention that there is a prior and posterior in the case of the Good, [Aristotle] distinguished how many ways the Good is said: because in the 10 categories substance is said to be it is own right and a being, whereas the others are accidents, and what is in its own right is prior to accidents' (*In Eth. Nic. Quae Supersunt Commentaria* 11, 29–12, 3). Wittwer (1999) argues plausibly and with considerable detail that the lemmata in our text go all the way back to Aspasius. If that is correct, then the placement of the lemma from *EN* 1096a17–1097a13–14 just before *In Eth. Nic. Quae Supersunt Commentaria* 11, 15 instead of before 11, 10 is all the more puzzling. This is a case, however, where the reading of the lemma differs from the paraphrase in the text, as Wittwer notes (1999, 75–76). This is significant for our purposes, because it calls into question whether the *separation* is, from Aspasius' perspective, after all Plato's main mistake. There is some reason to doubt this, beyond the current placement of the lemma, since, as Konstan helpfully notes (2006, 190 n. 28), the citation of Aristotle here was added by a second hand in ms. Z.

premiss of his reconstruction to be making. He thinks that it turns crucially on the thought that only accidents can participate in a non-uniform manner, whereas substantial beings participate, as with sparrows, always and necessarily in a uniform manner.

At first this interpretation may seem surprising. For one might reasonably think that this state of affairs should pose no problem for Aristotle: goodness can plainly be predicated accidentally. After all, people strive to be good. Some succeed, others fail. Strikingly, Eustratius takes a different view of the situation, bringing an interesting twist to his discussion. He reminds the reader that it is the Idea of Goodness which is under discussion, not goodness as realized in this or that particular. The ideal Form of the Good, he intones, *is* a substance, and so not the sort of thing which could be good accidentally or to one degree or another; its goodness is complete and whole at every moment. It is true that good things can be more or less good. Yet, treating the scalarity of good things as a reason to think that Goodness is scalar, he complains, is to mistake the copies for the paradigm of which they are copies (*in Nic. Eth*. 44, 3–12). In effect, he says, even if good things can be more or less good, the Good itself can be nothing of the sort. Goodness considered in itself is in fact anathema to scalarity of any kind.

So far, then, if this captures the gist of his response, Eustratius emerges as partisan in the extreme, and tendentiously so. He is certainly right to complain that Aristotle owes us a defence of his minor premiss, that good things are arranged in a series of prior and posterior members. Aristotle owes us, that is, a reason for believing that good things are like numbers, that the analogy to which he implicitly appeals obtains. This will remain so even after we have, if we have, granted the first premiss, that there are no Forms for series.

In this sense, Eustratius moves rather too quickly in his attempt to foreclose on the possibility that Aristotle might have a reason to posit priority and posteriority among good things in such a way as to generate the analogy with numbers he seeks.[16] Moreover, in retorting that the Form of the Good *is* a substance, Eustratius at best gainsays Aristotle's objection and at worst actively begs the question against him. In the first case, Aristotle does not, or does not directly,[17] commit himself to the thesis that Goodness is a substance, treating it throughout his critical discussion as if it were a quality predicated of its bearers. In the second case, one may fairly complain, without taking sides in the debate, that the separate existence of the Good is at least partly what is at issue in this chapter.[18] Consequently, also in question, on the assumption that being separate is a

[16] We develop and assess several such attempts in § 3.1.

[17] Eustratius may be thinking that Aristotle's commitment to a prime mover in *Met*. *Λ* 7–9 constitutes some such commitment; this would, however, require a protracted argument not given by Eustratius.

[18] See, however, § 1.1.6.

necessary condition of being a substance,[19] is precisely the issue of whether Goodness, or the Form of the Good, could plausibly be taken to be a substance.

Taking that all together, Eustratius's surprising reconstruction of the second premiss of Aristotle's argument from a series of goods underwhelms. This is not to say, however, that Aristotle is right to advance the contention he does. On the contrary, the construction Eustratius puts on his motivation, creatively polemical though it is, has at least the advantage of supplying *some* underlying motivation or other for Aristotle's surprising contention that good things are arranged in a series akin to the series of numbers. For, in truth, Aristotle's actual motives are a bit hard to fathom.[20] His reconstruction thus serves to bring into sharp relief one pressing question about this argument: why does Aristotle think that good things are arranged in a series with some good things prior to others, as the number three is prior to the number seven?

In a similar way, each of Eustratius's presentations and responses to Aristotle's criticisms shines a light on an important issue that Aristotle, or a defender of Aristotle's, really does need to address. One particularly instructive presentation deals with Aristotle's fourth argument, concerning the idleness of speaking of 'the Good Itself' (*EN* i 6, 1096a34–1096b5). As we have seen, the basic argumentative structure of Aristotle's complaint, given in Aristotle's argument regarding speaking of the 'Good Itself' (**GI**), is reasonably clear, even though crucial details are left underspecified.[21] Aristotle evidently takes exception to the Academic policy of appending '-itself' to various nouns and nominal adjectives, as if that were sufficient to reify an abstract object corresponding to a quality realized in the perceptual world. We view various large things—elephants, mountains, heavyweight wrestlers—but then notice that being large in each case is context-sensitive. As against the largeness these perceptibles exemplify, there is also, according to Plato, a context-invariant paradigm, which we may term Largeness-Itself.[22] Generalizing, says Aristotle, the Platonists simply help themselves to this terminology across the board, appending 'itself' (*αὐτό*) to each thing (*ἕκαστον*) they care to reify, naming the resulting entity 'Each-thing Itself' (*αὐτοέκαστον*) (*EN* i 6, 1096a34–35). They then complete their story by rendering 'Each-thing Itself' as somehow paradigmatic for each thing falling under it, and say that each of the context-variant φ-things is φ just because it somehow imitates the context-invariant paradigm, φ-itself.

[19] See Katz (2017) for a review of the issues surrounding substance and separation.

[20] We take up this matter in detail in the next chapter.

[21] See § 1.4.

[22] For present purposes, we may understand φ to be context-invariant if there are no two contexts c_1 and c_2 such that '…is φ' applies to the same subject *s* is c_1 but not c_2. So, '…is fast' is context-variant because it applies to a boy in the domain primary-school students but not in the domain of human beings. By contrast, '…is even' is context-invariant. Every number which is even is always, in every context, even.

Aristotle lodges two complaints, one to the effect that the 'Good Itself' will fare no better than the hypothesized 'Human Itself' (*αὐτο-ἄνθρωπος*), since the accounts of 'being human' as applied to a random human and the so-called Human Itself will turn out to be the same, with the result that nothing will be gained by the Academic effort. Further, nothing will be procured in terms of the promulgated paradigmatic character of the *φ*-itself by treating it as something eternal: after all, nothing white is made any whiter by its being eternally so. By parity of reason, then, nothing of value is purchased by making the Good-Itself eternal. It is not thereby better than other good things; so, its being eternal gives us no reason to regard it as somehow paradigmatic. Taking these complaints together, Aristotle concludes that the postulation in this case, the Good-Itself, will be, as for every other putative *φ*-itself, wholly otiose.

Eustratius mounts a spirited defence, noting first, correctly, that the argument is in fact trained on all Forms, and so on the Form of the Good only as a special case (*in Nic. Eth*. 49, 22–24). He addresses Aristotle's first complaint frontally, demanding to know how it can be the case that a *φ*-thing can be *φ* in the same way as what is paradigmatically *φ*. So perplexing is this contention to him that he in fact falls into addressing the author of the complaint directly:

> But how will the Good, oh Aristotle, be itself and be in like manner in what is immaterial and what is enmattered, in an image and in a paradigm, in what is simple and in what is complex, and in what is [good] by way of participation and in what is not [good] by way of participation (*in Nic. Eth.* 49, 24–27)?

So far, at least, Eustratius has not shown that *φ* cannot be predicated in like manner of *φ*-things and what is *φ*-itself, but he does at least rightly counter that Aristotle owes us some justification for the contention that this is possible. From where Eustratius sits, this seems not only not obviously true but is rather, on the contrary, obviously false: after all, if we were to say that Human-itself and a random human—an abstract entity and a material being—were human in exactly the same way, we would expect the abstract thing to wander about, eat, drink, and converse with its mates. Preposterous, thinks Eustratius.[23]

[23] It is noteworthy that in his exasperated manner of speaking Eustratius risks conceding something for which Aristotle himself is actually keen to argue, namely that the predicate '…is good' is non-univocal. At any rate, he demands to know how the predicate can be 'itself and be in like manner in what is immaterial and what is enmattered, in an image and in a paradigm' (*τὸ αὐτὸ ἔσται καὶ ὡσαύτως ἐν τῷ ἀύλῳ καὶ ἐν τῷ ἐνύλῳ καὶ ἐν τῇ εἰκόνι καὶ τῷ παραδείγματι*; *in Nic. Eth.* 49, 24–25). One natural reading of this demand understands it to presuppose that it cannot be the same in these various subjects—and so must be non-univocal. Another possibility absolves him of this misstep by supposing that though the predicate is univocal across all applications, its manner of predication (*ὡσαύτως*) differs in different applications. Although possible, this tension highlights one of several difficulties we observe in the diverse ways in which Aristotle's criticisms have been received by different readers in different periods.

What is more, he notes, still addressing Aristotle, 'even according to you' (καὶ κατὰ σέ; *in Nic. Eth.* 49, 30), a complete definition (ὅρος) of an enmattered, physical thing will make reference to the matter as well as the form.[24] So, as an ad hominem matter, Aristotle ought to accept the view, even if tendered only counterfactually, that abstract things, which are ex hypothesi immaterial, cannot share definitions with material beings—if, that is, as Eustratius understands Aristotle to maintain, the definitions of physical, material beings, must make reference to their essences and their essences include matter.

Finally, Eustratius offers an intriguing retort to Aristotle's contention that white things are none the whiter for being long-lasting. He implicitly charges Aristotle with conflating two senses of 'eternal' (ἀίδιον), namely being timeless and being everlasting in time (τὸ πολυχρόνιον; i*n Nic. Eth.* 50, 5). He fully grants that something long-lasting will not as a rule be φ in any way other than what is φ only for a short while. After all, he observes, a long-lived human will be no more human than a human with a short life (*in Nic. Eth.* 50, 10–12). Yet what holds between long-lived humans and white things does not carry over to the differences obtaining between the ephemeral and the eternal, where the latter is understood to comprise only the atemporal (*in Nic. Eth.* 50, 10–15). In sum, 'the eternal and the ephemeral do not receive the same nature' even though, by contrast, the short- and long-lived precisely do receive the same nature (*in Nic. Eth*. 50, 23–26). Indeed, if there is some such thing as the White-Itself, it had better not be white, for then it would be both immaterial and material—a blunder, Eustratius opines, no Platonist need embrace. The upshot of Eustratius's retort, then, is to accuse Aristotle of foisting on the Platonist an obviously avoidable, plainly feeble mistake. As he informs us on behalf of them all, the Platonist Eustratius feels no compunction whatsoever to embrace Aristotle's complaint.

Now, in reviewing Eustratius's rejoinder to Aristotle, we should not suppose that we have witnessed one philosopher being vanquished by another. Surely Aristotle's champions will rightly request an opportunity to develop responses and retorts of their own, and, in fact, such further developments to the dialectic are not hard to envisage. The point in the current context is simply to register that Aristotle's arguments have not always found an appreciative audience; some, very reasonably informed readers, prove rather dismissive, sometimes hostilely so. Those who, like Eustratius, are underwhelmed by Aristotle's polemics equally deserve their day in the court of dialectic. Needless to say, Eustratius, no less than Aristotle himself, is a partisan in this exchange. Still, when the courtesy of neutral assessment is granted both parties, we find at a minimum that Aristotle's arguments require development and defence if they are to meet the assault of Eustratius.

[24] Presumably Eustratius has the difficult discussion of Aristotle's *Met*. Z 10–11 in view in making this ascription.

2.3.2 A Committed Medieval Aristotelian: Thomas Aquinas

Although mainly neglected by subsequent generations of scholars working on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Eustratius's commentaries on *Nicomachean Ethics* i and vi were known and evidently studied with care by Thomas Aquinas, writing in the century after his death. They had been translated into Latin by Grosseteste,[25] and were cited by Aquinas across a fair number of his works.[26] He does not, however, enter into the spirit of the defence of Plato mounted by Eustratius. On the contrary, Aquinas offers a measured, careful, primarily appreciative set of comments on *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6. He also renders a judgement about their intended target and the fundamental basis of Aristotle's objections, both of which, upon careful inspection, prove entirely apt. On the question of their ultimate merit, Aquinas comes down diametrically opposed to Eustratius: he accepts both the conclusions of Aristotle's arguments and the arguments, as he understands them, offered on their behalf.

Aquinas divides his treatment of the chapter into three lectures, marking what he takes to be its main divisions (*Comm. in Nic. Eth*. I, lect. 6, 7, and 8). The first lecture treats the first three arguments, concerning priority, the categories, and the sciences (*EN* i 6, 1096a17–34); the second covers Aristotle's discussion of the question of the possibility that the Form of the Good is restricted to per se goods, and so, in effect, the remaining arguments of the axiological section of the chapter (*EN* i 6, 1096a34–b29), and the third takes up the normative arguments which round out the chapter (*EN* i 6, 1096b30–1097a14), all of which Aquinas treats as counterfactual, as taking up the refuted hypothesis that there is a common notion of goodness and arguing that 'even if there were, it would not lead to the contention that happiness is to be sought in accordance with it' (*nunc ostendit quod etiam si esset, non pertineret ad propositum, ut scilicet secundum ipsam esset quaerenda felicitas*; *Comm. in Nic. Eth*. I, lect. 8 § 97).

The first of the three lectures begins by trying to situate the chapter in what has preceded it. Aquinas does not think the discussion in *Nicomachean Ethic*s i 6 is a digression of any sort. Instead, he thinks that it is simply a continuation of Aristotle's attempt to determine what happiness consists in, and that, having shown that it cannot reside in honour or pleasure, 'he disproves the opinion of those placing it in a separated good' (*improbat opinionem ponentium felicitatem in quodam bono separato*; *Comm. in Nic. Eth*. I, lect. 6 § 64). He readily identifies the author of this theory as Plato, and speaks indifferently throughout his critique of 'Plato' and the 'Platonists', making clear along the way that he means to

[25] For a discussion of Eustratius's influence on Aquinas, focussing primarily on his conception of happiness, see Gauthier (1969), Wieland (1981) and (1982), Thiry (1987), and Donato (2006).

[26] So, e.g., *Super II Sent*. d. 9, q. 1 a. 8; *Super III Sent.* d. 23, q. 1 a. 4, qla. 2, ad. 3; d. 33, q. 2 a. 4, sol. 3. There are also a fair number of indirect references, which, though, not citing Eustratius by name, are clearly to his commentaries: *Super III Sent*. d. 23, q. 1 a. 4, q la. 2, ad. 3; d. 33, q. 2 a. 4, sol. 3.

distinguish Plato from the historical Socrates (*Comm. in Nic. Eth.* I, lect. 6 § 78), thus treating Socrates, the character in the relevant Platonic dialogues, as the mouthpiece for Plato's views.

Given that he introduces Plato's view of the Good as one in which the good is separated, it would be natural to suppose that Aquinas, like Aspasius,[27] understands Aristotle to take separation as his primary ground for rejecting the Platonic approach. However natural, though, this supposition would be incorrect. In fact, the central—and most importantly correct—observation Aquinas offers in his discussion is precisely the opposite:

> [H]e refutes the position of Plato, which says that the happiness of man consists in a certain common Idea or Form of the good. In regard to this, he does two things. First, he shows that there is no one common idea of the good. Second…he shows that even if there were, human happiness would not consist in it. In regard to the first, he does two things. First, he shows that there cannot be one common Idea of good. Second…he examines the manner of speaking used by the Platonists when they talk about this Idea. In regard to the first, we must consider that Aristotle does not intend to refute the opinion insofar as Plato posited a separated good on which all goods would depend. In the twelfth book of his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle himself posits a certain good, separated from the universe, to which the whole universe is ordered as an army is ordered to the good of the general. He refutes the opinion insofar as Plato held that the separated good is an Idea common to all goods (*Comm. in Nic. Eth.* I, lect. 6 § 79).[28]

Aquinas understands Aristotle, rightly as will emerge, as focussing not on separation but on univocity. His immediate argument is *ad hominem*, in that he points out, reasonably enough, that Aristotle could decry the separation of the good only on pains of inconsistency. That is correct, as far is it goes, but Aquinas bases his argument on Aristotle's characterization of the unmoved mover in *Metaphysics Λ*. He does not press the point, as he might have done, that there is corroborating evidence from within *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 itself. The core arguments Aristotle

[27] See Aspasius (2014, 11, 1).

[28] *…improbat positionem Platonis dicentem quod felicitas hominis consistit in quadam communi idea boni. Et circa hoc duo facit. Primo ostendit, quod non est una communis idea boni. Secundo ostendit, quod etiam si esset, non consisteret in ea humana felicitas…Circa primum duo facit. Primo ostendit, quod non sit una communis idea boni. Secundo inquirit de modo loquendi, quo Platonici hanc ideam nominabant…Circa primum considerandum est, quod Aristoteles non intendit improbare opinionem Platonis quantum* ad hoc *quod ponebat unum bonum separatum, a quo dependerent omnia bona, nam et ipse Aristoteles in XII Metaphysicae ponit quoddam bonum separatum a toto universo, ad quod totum universum ordinatur, sicut exercitus ad bonum ducis. Improbat autem opinionem Platonis quantum* ad hoc *quod ponebat illud bonum separatum esse quamdam ideam communem omnium bonorum.* (*Comm. in Nic. Eth.* I, lect. 6 § 79).

offers in that chapter are directed against univocity and commonality, not separation.

Two of Aquinas's discussions are of special note, the first concerning his understanding of Aristotle's Goods Across the Categories (**GAC**) (*EN* i 6, 1096a23–29),[29] and the second regarding his approach to Aristotle's brief reflection on the sort of unity good things display in spite of their non-univocity (*EN* i 6, 1096b26–29). The first shows how Aquinas appreciates the force of Aristotle's position in a way Eustratius does not. The second ushers in an intriguing question regarding the kinds of unity Aristotle may yet envision for goodness, despite his spirited anti-Platonism. This discussion is especially apposite, given Aquinas's understanding of the chapter as focussing primarily on commonality rather than separation.

Aquinas understands the categorial argument straightforwardly (*EN* i 6, 1096a23–29), in a manner wholly in keeping with our own first formulation:[30]

> To understand the force [of Aristotle's second reason, *scil*. the categorial argument] it must be understood that Plato maintained that the Idea is the account (*ratio*) and essence of all things that partake of the Idea. From this it follows that where there is no common nature of things neither can there be a single Idea. But there is no single common nature of the delineated categories, for nothing is predicated of them univocally. Good, however, just like being, with which it is convertible, is found in every category. Thus [in the category of] that which is (*quod quid est*), that is, substance, God, in whom there is no evil, is called good, and the intellect, which is always true, is called good. In quality, however, virtue, which makes the one having it good, [is called good]; in quantity, however the mean, which is the good in everything subject to measure, is called good; in relation, however, it is the useful, that which is good relative to a proper end, that is called good; in when, a time, namely the opportune time, is called good; and in place, a location [for instance] somewhere suitable for walking, like a summer house, is called good. The same is clear for the other types as well. It is manifest, therefore, that there is not some single good, that is, some idea or common *ratio*, of all good things. Otherwise, it would be necessary that good would not be found in all the categories, but in one alone (*Comm. in Nic. Eth*. I, lect. 6 § 81).[31]

[29] See § 1.5 and, more fully, § 4.1. [30] See § 1.5.2.

[31] *Ad cuius evidentiam sciendum est, quod Plato ponebat ideam esse rationem et essentiam omnium eorum, quae ideam participant. Ex quo sequitur, quod eorum quorum non est una ratio communis, non possit esse una idea. Sed diversorum praedicamentorum non est una ratio communis. Nihil enim univoce de his praedicatur. Bonum autem sicut et ens, cum quo convertitur, invenitur in quolibet praedicamento; sicut in quod quid est,* id *est in substantia, bonum dicitur Deus, in quo non cadit malitia, et intellectus, qui semper est rectus. In qualitate autem virtus, quae bonum facit habentem. In quantitate autem commensuratum, quod est bonum in quolibet quod subditur mensurae. In ad aliquid autem bonum est utile, quod est relatum in debitum finem. In quando autem tempus, scilicet opportunum, et in ubi locus congruus ad ambulandum, sicut dieta. Et idem patet in aliis generibus. Manifestum est ergo, quod non est*

Simply put, '…is good' can be predicated of items in various categories of being, which suffices to show that it is not univocally predicated, which in turn suffices to show that there is no single common nature, and so no Form of the Good.

Although it hews fairly closely to Moerbeke's narrowly literal translation, Aquinas's presentation adds a series of brief explications and expansion to the text, indicating the grounds for which he thinks items in each of the categories mentioned merit the predicate '…is good'. His basic thought is that the predicate '…is good' is applied in different categories on the basis of different accounts or grounds. Thus, in the category of substance, God is called good as being utterly bereft of evil, while the intellect is called good in view of its inerrancy.[32] Similarly, a relative (*ad aliquid*) is called good when it conduces to the good, as being good for something, and a quality, like virtue, is good insofar as it makes its bearer good. This sort of presentation expands on what Aristotle himself says; he remains silent about the grounds for predicating goodness in each of the categories, merely noting that in fact it is. In Aquinas's slightly more expansive version, if the grounds or criteria for predicating φ in divergent categories themselves diverge, then that is already reason for thinking that φ is predicated non-univocally in those instances. This further commitment seems open to question, and indeed will be questioned,[33] but it does provide at least one possible route to establishing the non-univocity both Aristotle and Aquinas seek in the case of goodness.

After this brief expansion, however, Aquinas simply provides a crisp, clear version of the argument we have already identified as the key support for the categorial argument,[34] namely that if goodness were univocal, it would not be possible to predicate goodness across the categories. This too is an aggressive claim on the part of both Aquinas and Aristotle, contending as it does that a sufficient condition for the non-univocity of predicate φ is simply its being predicable in more than one category. This claim, too, can and will be challenged,[35] since, after all, one seems perfectly able to predicate '…is an instance of an ontological category' in a perfectly univocally manner of items in diverse categories.[36] Be that as it may, it is fair to say that Aquinas is satisfied that he sees a compelling set of considerations in Aristotle's categorial argument. He accordingly regards it as successful in a way that Eustratius and others could not.

Aquinas also brings something of value to his commentary when he amplifies a second passage of Aristotle's discussion. This is the intriguing passage in which Aristotle reflects briefly on the forms of unity we might yet find across instances

aliquod unum bonum commune, quod scilicet sit idea vel ratio communis omnium bonorum: alioquin oporteret, quod bonum non inveniretur in omnibus praedicamentis, sed in uno solo (*Comm. in Nic. Eth.*, I, lect. 6 § 81).

[32] Aquinas might be thinking of *intellectus* here as good *insofar as* it grasps the truth or of *intellectus* as operating properly, namely as comprehending or understanding.

[33] See § 4.2. [34] See § 1.1.4. [35] See § 4.2.

[36] I owe this example to Stephen Biggs, who offered it during a very profitable discussion of this argument at Iowa State University.

of goodness, equivocal though the predicate is (*EN* i 6, 1096b9–15). Recall that just before turning from the axiological to the normative section of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, Aristotle issues a brief, somewhat conciliatory question: how is goodness to be spoken of, given that it is not homonymous by chance? It is not like '…is a heel' said of a bone in the foot and of a reprobate boyfriend.[37] Even if we agree that '…is good' as predicated of a mind and a location is equivocal, it seems plain that they are nonetheless somehow intimately connected. Aristotle provides two possibilities in the form of two questions, but then leaves the matter undeveloped: 'Is it, then, spoken of [like those instances of homonymy] where all things derive from one thing or contribute to one thing? Or is it rather spoken of by analogy?' (*EN* i 6, 1096b27–28; cf. *Met*. *Δ* 6, 1016b31–17a2, *Θ* 6, 1048b7–98). The first is an instance of core-dependent homonymy and the second of analogy, whereby *a* bears some relation *R* to *b*, in much the way that *c* bears *R* to *d*. So, for instance, to use Aristotle's own illustration, as the eyes are to the body, so the mind is to the soul.

Could good things be ordered in either of those two ways? Neither seems immediately promising, though surely some things can be said on behalf of either. As it turns out, Aquinas does just that. In fact, Aquinas treats core-dependent homonymy as comprising two sorts of coordinations, both distinguished from a third, analogy.[38] He notices that things might be referred back to a single core in one of two ways, either as to a source (*principium*) or to an end (*finis*). In the first case, a uniform, a sword, and a horse may all be called 'military' as deriving from the same source (*principium*), namely their uses in a military context. In the second case, both medicine and diet may be called healthy, because of the diverse ways in which they contribute to the same end (*finis*), namely health. Perhaps, then, good may be ordered in one of these three ways.

Aquinas is understandably a bit tentative in his handling of this matter:

> He thus says, therefore, that good is predicated of many things not in view of [their having] deeply differing accounts (*rationes*), as happens with things equivocal by chance, but insofar as all good things derive from one source (*principio*) or insofar as they are ordered to one end (*finis*). For Aristotle was not

[37] Aristotle's own example is key or bolt (*κλείς*) which in Greek is predicated both of the clavicle and of the device for securing doors.

[38] This collapses two options into one, where one might more naturally understand Aristotle—as Aquinas in fact does understand Aristotle—to be offering three and not two alternatives. Here Moebeke's text in Latin captures the syntax of Aristotle's Greek fairly well: '*Non enim assimulantur a casu aequivoccis. Sed certe ei quod es ab uno esse vel ad unum omnia contenders. Vel magis secundum analogiam*…' from '*οὐ γὰρ ἔοικε τοῖς γε ἀπὸ τύχης ὁμωνύμοις. ἀλλ' ἆρά γε τῷ ἀφ' ἑνὸς εἶναι ἢ πρὸς ἓν ἅπαντα συντελεῖν, ἢ μᾶλλον κατ' ἀναλογίαν*; *EN* i 6 1096b26–28). Taken as three: (i) source (*principio*) derivative; (ii) ordered to the same end (*finis*); and (iii) analogy. Taken as two: (i) core-dependent homonymy, as either source- or end-dependent or (ii) analogy. Collapsing them into two treats the source (*ἀρχή*) and the end (*τέλος*) as one and the same, as Aristotle occasionally treats them as coalescing (*Met*. *θ* 8 1050a7–10). On core-dependent homonymy, see Shields (1999) ch. 4.

> minded to hold that the separated good be an Idea and *ratio* of all goods but their principle and end. Or yet all things are called good rather according to analogy, that is, as having the same proportion, just as sight is the good of the body and the intellect is the good of the soul. He therefore prefers this third way, however, because it is comprehended according to goodness inherent in things. The first two ways, however, are comprehended according to a separated goodness, from which a thing is not in like manner properly denominated good (*Comm. in Nic. Eth*. I, lect. 67 § 96).[39]

Aquinas then is more determinate where Aristotle is less so, deciding on his behalf that the sort of unity he spies among good things derives, or derives primarily, not from one of the two modes of core-dependent homonymy he distinguishes, as deriving from a from a source (*principium*) or as ordered to an end (*finis*), but rather from analogy. His reason, only very briefly stated, is that good things are not properly denominated good on the basis of core-dependent homonymy, or, at any rate, are better and more properly so denominated on the basis of analogy.

Here Aquinas begins to sketch an answer to a large, multivalent question which Aristotle raises but does not himself answer in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6. It is a question looming in Aristotle's anti-Platonism and one he must unavoidably address: if not univocity, then what? That is, Aristotle shows himself unwilling to suppose that goodness is a chance homonym, that '…is good' in 'Socrates is good' and 'The virtue of charity is good' are related in a way that, for instance, '…is a bank' when said of the periphery of a river and a savings institution are not. The crucial question then becomes just how they might be related. Aquinas is uncharacteristically circumspect at first, as between core-dependent homonymy and analogy, but he does come down, in this passage at least, on the side of analogy, on the questionable grounds that analogical predications of being-φ treat φ as inherent in their bearers,[40] whereas core-dependent treatments regard them as non-inherent, as ordered to an end, for instance, which treats the good in question as extrinsic to the subject called good.

This is questionable not least because he himself has just explicated Aristotle's categorial argument by noting that in the category of relation (*ad aliquid*), 'it is

[39] *Sic ergo dicit, quod bonum dicitur de multis, non secundum rationes penitus differentes, sicut accidit in his quae sunt casu aequivoca, sed inquantum omnia bona dependent ab uno primo bonitatis principio, vel inquantum ordinantur ad unum finem. Non enim voluit Aristoteles quod illud bonum separatum sit idea et ratio omnium bonorum, sed principium et finis. Vel etiam dicuntur omnia bona magis secundum analogiam, id est proportionem eandem, quantum scilicet quod visus est bonum corporis, et intellectus est bonum animae. Ideo autem hunc tertium modum praefert, quia accipitur secundum bonitatem inhaerentem rebus. Primi autem duo modi secundum bonitatem separatam, a qua non ita proprie aliquid denominatur* (*Comm. in Nic. Eth*. I, lect. 67 § 96).

[40] This is a problem to which we will return in § 9.2, where we offer an answer other than the option Aquinas prefers.

the useful (*utile*), that which is good relative to a proper end, that is called good' (*Comm. in Nic. Eth.* I, lect. 6 § 81). This is not to say that Aquinas blunders; on the contrary, he highlights a difficulty immediately consequent upon Aristotle's categorial argument, a difficulty of which Aquinas, perhaps precisely given his own Aristotelian inclinations, is acutely aware. Aquinas brings to the fore a problem which others have passed over in silence.[41]

Taking that all together, then, we find in Aquinas a sympathetic, appreciative treatment of Aristotle's chapter, one seeking to offer at once an exposition and defence of Aristotle's anti-Platonism. Aquinas takes it for granted that the chapter is in fact anti-Platonic in intent, and that Aristotle's target in these discussions is in fact Plato himself; upon reviewing the arguments, he concludes that Aristotle's criticisms are by and large altogether effective.

He then notices, as he should, that a question arises in the wake—as he sees the matter—of Aristotle's success. How are good things, then, related to one another? How are they to be compared and ordered, *if* they are indeed to be compared and ordered? Plato's answer is simple enough: good things are to be measured by their relation to the Form of the Good: the more they imitate it, the better they are. Plato has, in sum, a propinquity metric: the nearer *x* is to the Form of the Good, the better *x* is. If that simple answer is too simple, as Aristotle implies it is, then what more complex metric will he develop to supplant it? Or will he be left in the wake of his criticisms denying that good things can be ordinally ranked except, perhaps, those circumscribed goods compared within a narrowly circumscribed domain?

These and other like questions invite us, of course, to adopt an evaluative posture. As we have seen, in their different ways, both Eustratius and Aquinas offer views of the ultimate purport of Aristotle's criticisms; both also allow their own assessments to reflect their prior understandings of the target of Aristotle's criticisms. Their doing so thus implicitly raises a series of interlocking questions about our own eventual assessments. We will, however, appropriately postpone these important questions until after we have had a chance to explore further the reception of Aristotle's axiological reflections.

2.3.3 The Debate Continues

In their different ways, Eustratius and Aquinas offer forthright, unapologetic assessments of the worth of Aristotle's anti-Platonic polemic. Compared to some later critics, however, both, despite their strong individual convictions, prove rhetorically subdued when reporting their findings. Things change when we

[41] We address this concern in chapter 9.

move forward in time, to the nineteenth century, where we encounter two eminent Victorian Aristotelians, both Scottish, both Oxford educated, one, Alexander Grant (1826–1884) professionally active in Scotland as Principal of the University of Edinburgh (1868–1884), and the other, John Alexander Stewart (1846–1933), active in Oxford in various positions, eventually holding the White's Professorship in Moral Philosophy (1897–1927). Both wrote formidable commentaries on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Grant's appearing in two volumes in 1885 and Stewart's, also in two volumes, in 1892.

Grant certainly does not see Aristotle in the favourable light in which Aquinas seeks to cast him. On the contrary, he evinces a rather dyspeptic attitude towards the arguments of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6: 'Everyone has felt the unsatisfactoriness of these arguments; they seem captious, verbal, unreal, and not to touch the point at issue.'[42] Stewart is less acerbic, but equally incredulous. Speaking of Aristotle's evident[43] attempt to topple Plato's view of the good: 'It is difficult to understand a man of Aristotle's calibre attacking, as he does, a theory like this…' After all, observes Stewart, 'his own philosophy of human life, with its ideal of the θεωρητικὸς βίος [*theôrêtikos bios*, the contemplative life] and its doctrine of εὐδαιμονία [*eudaimonia*, happiness or human flourishing] as something not to be counted among particular good things (E. N. i. 7. 8), is in entire sympathy with it'. So, frets Stewart,[44] Aristotle evidently assaults an Academic theory of goodness the basic precepts of which he himself roundly approves.

We may wonder how they arrive at these conclusions, having studied the same text as Aquinas. In fact, though, the strong divergence we witness here is hardly atypical: the subsequent history of the reception of this text shows clearly how strongly polarized the reception of Aristotle's text remains down to the present day. There are also some surprising wrinkles along the way.

We may consider, for example, Gadamer's celebrated *Die Idee des Guten zwischen Plato und Aristoteles*.[45] In the fourth chapter of this work, by focussing primarily on *Eudemian Ethics* i 8,[46] Gadamer develops a surprisingly revisionary account, one critical of Aristotle, though not critical in a way that resonates with Grant or Stewart, or even Eustratius. In common with these critics, he contends that Aristotle misses his mark, but in so doing delivers to himself his own

[42] Grant (1885 vol. I, 208).

[43] In Stewart's view, this attempt is merely an 'evident' attempt to topple Plato's view, because in the end, again in Stewart's view, we are better advised to understand Aristotle's target to be a lesser Academic, like Speusippus, which would at least explain the grotesqueness of Aristotle's apparent failure. Stewart (1892, vol. 1, 77) thinks that Plato, 'as distinguished from weak disciples, did not regard—could not have regarded' the Good to have the features attacked in *EN* i 6.

[44] Stewart (1892, vol 1, 74).

[45] Gadamer (1978, ch. IV).

[46] He does allow, however, that the argument pertaining to Forms and series, which he locates at *EE* i 8, 12218a1–15, must be extracted from a corrupt text: 'Hier kann der text von EE nicht in Ordnung sein' (1978, 84). He is surely right about that stretch of text, since there is an obvious lacuna at *EE* 12218a8.

comeuppance. In the end, in fact, Gadamer concludes that despite his best efforts, Aristotle proves in the end to be a Platonist about the Good *malgré lui*. He argues, without warrant, that because he beholden, evidently unawares, to Platonic presuppositions in his own conception of goodness, Aristotle stumbles: he cannot resist the very idea he rejects, namely that the Good is somehow separate—though, ironically, and contrary to Aristotle's representation of him, Plato himself had in fact not treated the Form of the Good as separate.[47]

More fully, Gadamer understands Aristotle to be endeavouring to reject both Plato's presumed ontological separation of the Good and Speusippus's mathematicization of it, only, however, managing to reconfigure and to commit separation in his own theology:

> A paradoxical result: it is not Plato's notion of separation that lives on in the Aristotelian 'Theology'. On the contrary: the ontology of φύσει ὄντα [*phusei onta*; beings in nature] and the whole of motion that these beings comprise, force Aristotle into a 'Separation' of his own, one that moves beyond the mathematical construal of the transcendence of the Good.[48]

Gadamer's basic thought is that Aristotle's treatments in both the *Eudemian* and especially the *Nicomachean Ethics* aim primarily at undermining the existence of a separated Good, even while ultimately retaining a notion of goodness akin to Plato's in his own system, one which has, however, been subordinated to the natural world, the world of motion. Here, however, Aquinas's more careful attention to the text proves a more reliable guide. Recall his more nuanced understanding. After noting, as does Gadamer, that Aristotle himself endorses a separated good in *Metaphysics Λ* 12, Aquinas observes that separation is not his main complaint. Rather: 'He refutes the opinion insofar as Plato held that the separated good is an Idea common to all goods' (*Comm. in Nic. Eth*. I, lect. 6 § 79).

We see in the subsequent development of the history of the reception of Aristotle's text continued interest, but not always careful textual analysis. The divided judgement regarding the success or failure of Aristotle's axiological discussion continues unabated, however, down to the present day. Witness one final pair of opposing views—reprising our basic division once again—of a more recent vintage, one highly laudatory and the other severely critical.

One cheerily positive assessment owes to Jacquette, who represents the general tenor of one group, it seems the larger group, of present-day critics:

> Aristotle's seven arguments against the universal Good are condensed in seventy-four lines of Greek text, perhaps the most succinct and incisive

[47] This too is a surprising and utterly unlikely contention. See § 1.1.6.
[48] Gadamer (1978, 92).

> ethical-metaphysical critique of the concept of Good to be found anywhere in the history of philosophy. Together they constitute a necessary step in Aristotle's design for a new ethics, dismantling the Platonic architectonic in order to refashion his own humanistic study of the particular good for man, without which first negative effort the very concept of a non-universal Good would be incomprehensible.[49]

Jacquette offers a non-specialist but perfectly workmanlike review and presentation of Aristotle's arguments in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6. He reads Aristotle's arguments as a great advance, a sort of sine qua non for the very possibility of humanistic ethics. Others are similarly enthusiastic: to some, Aristotle's remarks seem even to prefigure Wittgenstein's doctrine of family resemblance, thus displaying a remarkably prescient suspicion of the inveterate philosophical habit of 'craving for generality' in the face of difference and divergence.[50] On this approach, Aristotle's remarks serve as a corrective to Plato's own unfortunate tendency to seek a sameness in the universal which obscures the variegation of the particular; Aristotle in response authors a liberating reorientation in ethics, casting off the arid abstractions of Plato in favour of the motley of goods we in fact seek in the conduct of our human lives.

Although he does not so say in so many words, Jacquette credits Aristotle not only with rejecting the putative *universality* of the Form of the Good, but also, and more importantly, with rejecting its *impersonality*. He stresses that the good Aristotle identifies is a 'particular good *for man*', that is, in our terms, a circumscribed as opposed to an absolute good. This, in Jacquette's view, is the linchpin of Aristotle's reorientation towards a new approach to ethics, a sine qua non in fact, making possible a humanistic enquiry. In his view, Aristotle's axiological opposition to Plato ushers forward a new and liberating axiology which in turns makes possible a defensible normative ethics, rightly focussed on a circumscribed good, *the good for human beings*. This is the good we seek in life; we care, as we should care and perhaps can only care, about the good in this domain, our domain, the good for human beings. Aristotle's arguments make this focus possible and permissible; we need only, as he shows, remove our gaze from the absolute good, which we in fact fail to see in any case, for it is not there to be seen. In its place, we focus on the features of the good for humans, which, as Aristotle proceeds to argue, is readily ascertainable from an informed investigation into the human function.

All told, he intones, Aristotle's efforts in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 represent a resounding success and a great advance in the history of ethics. We should be grateful.

[49] Jacquette (1998, 321–322).

[50] See e.g. Trabattoni (2013).

Yet once again we find that some others are not so sure. Writing less than ten years before Jacquette, Santas arrives at an altogether different set of conclusions, more sympathetic to Plato, not in the partisan manner of Eustratius, and certainly not in the incredulous manners of Grant and Stewart, but sympathetic to Plato all the same, and certainly less impressed by Aristotle's arguments than Jacquette showed himself to be:

> Aristotle does not succeed in showing that there is no universal good or a Platonic Form of Good. Plato can admit Aristotle's distinctions between being an instance of or resembling the form Good and being a means to or evidence of or a part of something good, without giving up his theory. Nor does Aristotle succeed in showing that Plato's Forms, as separate transcendental entities, cannot be paradigms or ideal exemplars. And though Plato's Form of the Good is formal and not practicable, Aristotle does not show that it is useless. Aristotle's critique also suffers from some inaccuracies, insofar as it seems to treat Plato's Form of the Good as if it were on a logical par with any other Platonic Form. And discussions of Aristotle's critique have suffered from the fact that they do not juxtapose that critique against an intelligible reconstruction of Plato's theory. When this is done, as we have tried to do it, Plato's theory appears both more intelligible and more viable. It is the first great perfectionist theory of goodness.[51]

There is much to commend in Santas's careful, philosophically adroit study; inevitably, though, there are also points inviting critical scrutiny.

Two questions already emerge as apposite. First, Santas complains of inaccuracies in Aristotle's representation, first among them his mistaken presentation of the Form of the Good as 'on a logical par with any other Platonic Form'. Whether this is a fair complaint turns in part on the question of what it takes for one Form to be on a logical par with any other Form. Certainly, as we have seen,[52] Plato definitely says centrally and forcefully that 'the Good is not being, but is yet further than being, surpassing it in dignity and power' (*οὐκ οὐσίας ὄντος τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, ἀλλ' ἔτι ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας πρεσβείᾳ καὶ δυνάμει ὑπερέχοντος*; *Rep.* vi 509b5–8). Some have supposed this to mean or entail that the Form of the Good is not really a Form at all, but perhaps an emergent structure manifested by the totality of Forms taken as a whole.[53] If that is so, then in some direct sense it will not be on a logical par with other Forms, since it will not itself in fact even be a Form. (Calling it the 'Form of the Good' would then be a harmless, deflationary misnomer, like calling the Prime Minister *primus inter pares*). If that were so, then if in turn Aristotle's criticisms regarded the Form of the Good merely as a Form alongside

[51] Santas (1989, 157). [52] See § 1.1.1.

[53] See Shields (2008) for a survey and review of the evidence for this conclusion. As reported in § 1.1.1, the evidence is unpersuasive.

other Forms, and so, for instance, as having the ideal attributes of all Forms, then his criticisms would be to that degree misdirected. They would be aiming at a position which Plato never espoused, and so, whether perversely or uncomprehendingly, would be trained on a straw target rather than a legitimately Platonic position. Here again, then, our eventual appraisals of Aristotle's arguments will be conditioned by our conception of what his target is or should be.

This gives way to a second question about Santas's own Platonic sympathies. He notes, correctly, that Aristotle is keen to show that there is no universal good—if at any rate, this is taken to be a consequence of his rejection of Platonic univocity. Unfortunately for him, Santas concludes, 'Aristotle does not succeed in showing that there is no universal good'. As Santas is aware, this sort of conclusion can be offered only after an exhaustive analysis of Aristotle's arguments in this direction, including most prominently the second argument of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, namely the argument regarding Goods Across the Categories (**GAC**) (*EN* i 6, 1096a23–29), which concludes that 'goodness is meant in many ways' (λέγεται πολλαχῶς), and not merely in one way, as the author of the theory of Forms had contended. Santas observes, again correctly, that (**GAC**) plainly presupposes the theory of categories itself, which presupposition, he avers, 'is so blatantly dependent on Aristotle's theory of the categories, a rival theory to Plato's theory of forms, that it clearly begs the question.'[54]

While it is not in all ways clear how it is a rival to Plato's theory of Forms, Aristotle's theory of categories is surely intended by Aristotle to have some manner of anti-Platonic purport. It is a further question, however, whether this renders Aristotle's argument against the Form of the Good in any interesting sense question-begging. If the theory of categories can be independently defended, then the argument has all the force and weight of that defended theory—provided, of course, that the non-univocity of goodness can, like the (putative) non-univocity of being, be inferred from the truth of that theory.[55]

That said, we should acknowledge that Aristotle formulates his anti-Platonic arguments from his own metaphysical perspective. We might nonetheless avoid any charge of question-begging if we are prepared to recognize, as surely we should, that as a full party to the Academic dialectic about the good, Plato, or a Platonist, is permitted to scrutinize Aristotle's arguments in turn: as our survey has in any case shown, Aristotle's arguments are not the last word on the question of the viability of Plato's conception of goodness. In so doing, we need not criticize them, in the manner of Eustratius, which is to say from the standpoint of a committed Platonist. We can, of course, do so if we so wish. Again, though, nothing compels us to do so; we can instead proceed, as far as we are able, to state and assess Aristotle's arguments from a comparatively neutral standpoint, at the very

[54] Santas (1989, 158 n. 13).

[55] This is the topic of chapter 4.

least not having decided in advance either that Plato's conception of goodness is hopeless or that Aristotle's arguments show that this is so.

We will make most progress, then, if we set aside one purport of Coleridge's adage that there 'are the two classes of men, besides which it is next to impossible to conceive a third'. Still less should we join him in his belief about Aristotle's acumen as a philosophical critic: 'I believe that Aristotle never could get to understand what Plato meant by an idea'.[56] That he rejects his commitments does not show that he fails to understand Plato's point of view. On the contrary, to the extent that his arguments hit their mark, he understands Plato's conception of goodness perfectly well. It falls to us, then, to make the relevant determinations.

2.4 Concluding Considerations

Taking stock, in viewing the history of the reception of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 we find ourselves confronted with a discomfiting jumble of attitudes. Some praise its arguments with unbridled enthusiasm, crediting them even with redirecting the history of ethics; others find them so bad as to be embarrassing, even to the point of supposing that they could not have been directed against Plato. So feeble are they, this set holds, that Aristotle must have had some other, lesser figure in mind when he developed and deployed them. As they rightly imply, Aristotle's arguments might in principle be terrible arguments if intended to be directed against Plato, but reasonable sorts of arguments if taken to be targeted elsewhere. After all, the problem of evil would be a pathetic argument trained upon the existence of Zeus, but certainly makes a case to be answered when directed against the existence of an omnipotent, omnibenevolent, omniscient god. Still, most see Aristotle's argument as directed against Plato, or Plato primarily and the Academics who followed him more generally.[57] Certainly these latter are

[56] Coleridge (1851, 100–101). Of course, Coleridge is not the only person to reach this conclusion. See also, in addition to Krohn (1876), Burnet (1928), Teichmüller (1881), who shows some odd ambivalence on this topic, and Natorp (1921).

[57] Flashar (1995, 57) regards Speusippus, when mentioned by Aristotle, as a mere surrogate for Plato: 'With the mention of Speusippus, Aristotle is now using an actual Academician to bear his attack on Plato, following here a procedure that is quite characteristic of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, i.e. deploying inconsistencies and contradictions within the criticized doctrine itself'. The matter is complicated, however. Aristotle noticeably does not name Plato in the central chapter in which he assails the Academic conception of goodness, *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, speaking instead only of those who introduced, or perhaps, those who *embraced* (*hoi komisantes*, *EN* 1096a17) the theory of Forms and mentioning by name only Speusippus (*EN* 1096b7), Plato's nephew and successor as head of the Academy. Some (e.g. Stewart (1892)) think that the presumption is more than contentious, but is in fact positively false, holding instead that Aristotle fails to mention Plato for the very good reason that he is talking not about him or his views, but rather about the views of Speusippus or Xenocrates, or perhaps of the other, lesser members of the Academy. This judgement is motivated in part by the thought that Aristotle's criticisms cannot be directed against someone whose views about the final good Aristotle in fact shares (e.g. Stewart (1892 vol. I, 74)). Three obstacles militate against this view. First, Stewart is wrong to suppose that Aristotle finds Plato's conception of goodness congenial in the

right-minded if they think that the judgement that Plato *cannot* be Aristotle's intended target should not be founded upon their presumptive weaknesses. After all, any such conclusion requires determining first that Aristotle's arguments are in fact weak; as we have seen, this is already a hotly disputed matter.

This is why we have first found it useful, following the good example of Eustratius,[58] to set out the main lineaments of Plato's own view of the Good. Doing so allows us at least to ask whether we may identify the theses targeted in Aristotle's arguments as among those Plato himself embraced. Thereafter, if this proves so, we may also ask whether Aristotle's arguments hit their mark.

With this much frame-setting, we may now proceed to an in-depth analysis of each of these arguments in turn, with an ultimate goal of determining their individual and collective worth.[59]

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relevant respects. Second, Speusippus, contrary to the view of Diogenes (*Vitae* iv 1), seems to have been one of the Academicians who in fact rejected Plato's theory of Forms; still less, then, was he one of those who introduced or promulgated it. Third, although the evidence is tenuous, Speusippus seems to have rejected in particular the principle of causal synonymy (that only φ things can cause non-φ things to become φ) relied upon by the author in Aristotle's sights (*Met*. 1028b21, 1072b31, 1091a34).

[58] And of Santas (1989).

[59] As we do so, we will find an observation of Flashar (1995, 63) proving true: 'An ongoing school discussion about the doctrine of Forms can be detected behind the formulations of this chapter [*scil. EN* i 6]. Especially in the second part (from 1096b8), objections are formulated, questions raised and critically answered. The formulations here are not always polished to a high degree. Many points only become fully comprehensible if Aristotle's statements are supplemented from other sources'.

3
A Series of Goods

3.1 Goods, in Order

One begins to appreciate the reasons for the wide divergence of attitudes we witness in the reception of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 immediately upon turning to its very first argument, the peculiarity of which is plain even upon a cursory inspection. It is arrestingly brief; and it is opaque in its brevity. The more one excavates its probable meaning, the clearer it becomes that it telescopes a great deal of Academic doctrine, some of which can be gleaned only by inference and conjecture, if it is not simply altogether inaccessible to us. The argument has only two premisses: (i) there are no Forms over items arranged in a series; and (ii) good things are arranged in a series (*EN* i 6, 1096a17–23). From just these two premisses, it follows that there is no Form of the Good.

So stated, the argument is at least plainly valid. Matters take on a perplexing hue, however, as soon as we attempt to determine why anyone might believe either of its premisses. Indeed, it is immediately surprising that Aristotle represents the first premiss as already accepted by the Platonists. That is, unlike the other arguments in the chapter, Aristotle offers this argument as co-opting a settled Platonic doctrine for deployment against them. As Aristotle represents the situation, the Academics join with him in holding that there are no Forms set over items arranged in a series. He then turns their agreement against them by contending that they are therefore in no position to subscribe to a Form of the Good. For since, Aristotle urges, good things are arranged in some manner of series, an Academic will be constrained to agree that there can be no Form over them, even on the assumption that there are Forms set over other, non-serially arranged particulars. The argument is thus at least to this degree ad hominem: according to Aristotle, Plato's own commitments serve to show up the falsity of his adherence to the Form of the Good.

In assessing this argument, we proceed in four stages. We begin by stating and analysing the argument as it is presented in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, while clearing the ground and settling some preliminary issues. So presented, the argument is almost wholly inadequate—to such a degree, in fact, that this already gives us reason to suppose that this cannot be the whole of the story. Fortunately, a parallel passage in *Eudemian Ethics* i 8 provides some additional data which serve to rescue the argument from the shortcomings of the version extracted from

Nicomachean Ethics. Based upon the treatment of the *Eudemian Ethics*, the argument may then be expanded, with a view towards reappraisal.

In contrast with the truncated version, the more sophisticated formulation reveals a good deal more structure behind Aristotle's objection to Plato. Unfortunately, it too, for subtler reasons, falls wide of its mark. Even so, one might, by relying on both texts in conjunction, hazard a conjecture about the source of Aristotle's confidence regarding goods and series. For once we have shown it in its best, textually anchored version, the argument against there being a Form set over a series of goods proves entirely reasonable, though not entirely devastating. It is not that Plato, or a Platonist, will face no issue regarding goods and series. On the contrary, taken at least one way, Aristotle's argument turns out to raise a familiar problem for a Platonist regarding the explanatory efficacy of the theory of Forms in general. If this is so, however, then it is not really peculiar to the Form of the Good.

It seems likely, however, that Aristotle has in view a special problem about the Form of the Good in this passage, and not a general, familiar complaint about Forms in general. Some informed conjectures about the exact contours of the argument are, however, worth considering. When considered, they primarily push the discussion forward into Aristotle's categorial concerns about the univocity of goodness, to which this first argument ultimately gives way.

3.2 A Complicated Simple Argument

Aristotle's first argument against Plato's Form of the Good in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 is deceptively simple in its presentation; in fact, it proves concise to the point of obscurity. Immediately after expressing his rueful duty to piety, Aristotle says:

> Those who advanced this view did not produce Ideas for those cases in which they said there was a prior and a posterior; and this is the very reason they did not furnish an Idea in the case of numbers. Yet *good* is used meaningfully in the <category of> *what it is* (*τί ἐστι*; *scil.* substance), and in quality and in relative; and what is in its own right, that is, substance, is by nature prior to the relative, for this seems to be an offshoot and a co-incident of a being, so that there would be no common Idea over these (*EN* i 6, 1096a17–23).

In its simplest formulation, the argument closest to the text here is easy to state, but hard to fathom:

(1) Where things φ_1, $\varphi_2 \ldots \varphi_n$ are related as prior and posterior (*πρὸτερον καὶ ὕστερον*), there is no Form φ-ness set over them.

(2) Good things are related as prior and posterior.
(3) So, there is no Form Goodness set over good things.

What might be said on behalf of either of these premisses?

Beginning with the second, we are initially left perplexed. If we consider a random variety of good things, or, to put matters in a linguistic idiom, if we consider a random set of things of which we predicate '…is good',[1] we discern no immediate ordering. Consider, for instance, the sentences:

- Gelato on a hot evening in Rome never fails to be good.
- No one can deny that Damrau's rendition of Strauss's *Morgen* is good.
- Some shortcuts are good—some are just shortcuts. This one is good.
- Spite is soul-draining and self-destructive; genuine forgiveness is, for all parties, something good.

The four general kinds of things here called good—evening treats in Rome, renditions of Lieder, directions of travel, and psychological processes—are all, let us agree, good things. But they stand in no discernible ordering relation. Certainly they are not readily likened to the series of numbers, to which Aristotle implicitly does liken good things when he notes that 'this is the very reason they [*scil.* the Academics] did not establish an Idea of numbers.' If we take the comparison to the number series at face value, then we should expect each predication of goodness to stand in some determinate priority-posteriority relation to every other, such that each has a fixed and unalterable position in a determinate, changeless series. It is difficult to fathom how one could even begin to construct an argument for any such view. It seems patently outlandish.

Fortunately, as Aristotle's own brief illustration indicates, in thinking of the orderings of good things, he is not taking the comparison to the number series at face value. Rather, he is contending that predications of goodness, like the numbers, stand to one another in priority and posterity relations, a thesis which is compatible with the thought that predications of goodness collect themselves into kinds, such that some kinds are, along some dimension to be specified, prior to others, while others are posterior to them. Consistent with this picture, some kinds of goods could be prior to all other kinds, others posterior to all other kinds, and some prior to some and posterior to others. On the assumption that a

[1] In speaking of 'predicates' in this connection, we may adopt a linguistic idiom for clarity or ease of expression, but in each case we should bear in mind that Plato is ultimately thinking in metaphysical terms, as we can surmise from *Republic* 596a and especially *Parmenides* 130e–131a: 'So, tell me this: is it your view that, as you say, there are certain Forms whose names these other things have through getting a share of them as, for instance, they came to be like by getting a share of Likeness, large by getting a share of Largeness, and just and beautiful by getting a share of Justice and Beauty?' 'It certainly is', Socrates replied.

suitable priority relation could be specified, this would suffice to justify a general comparison with the number series, for which, we are told, not even the Platonists want Forms.

On the assumption that this general orientation is correct, there remains the task of specifying the priority and posteriority relations obtaining between kinds of good things. Here too Aristotle provides at least a suggestion within this brief passage. He appeals to the doctrine of categories, contending that substances are 'prior in nature' (*πρὸτερον κατὰ φύσιν*) to other categories of beings, like qualities or relations. This specifies the priority relation clearly as a familiar sort of priority, namely priority in nature, as it obtains in the categories, where his form of priority receives a full (if disputed)[2] characterization in *Metaphysics Δ*. There it is explicitly aligned with priority in substance (*κατὰ φύσιν καὶ οὐσίαν*; *Met. Δ* 11, 1019a1–2). More fully:

> Some things are called prior and posterior in this way, while others are called so in nature and substance, those for which it is possible to be without other things, but not the latter without them (*Met. Δ* 11, 1019a1–4).[3]

At least initially, this passage seems to gloss priority in nature or substance in terms of an asymmetry of existence implication: *a* is prior to *b* just in case (i) *a* can exist without *b*, while (ii) *b* cannot exist without *a*. Thus, to take an illustration initially favourable to this way of understanding priority in nature and substance, Socrates can exist without his pallor, while his pallor cannot exist without him. Generalizing, then, substances can exist without their intrinsic accidents, whereas intrinsic accidents cannot exist without the substances of which they are predicated.

Applying this understanding to the case at hand, we might be inclined to think that predications of goodness in the category of substance are prior in nature to predications of goodness in other categories of being. So, for instance, Aristotle mentions the non-substantial categories of quality and relative (*πρός τι*), where a relative, we know from *Categories* 7, is one of a pair of correlatively existing beings, each of whose existence implies the existence of the other, and indeed, each of whose definitions or accounts must mention the existence of the others

[2] See Peramatzis (2011), with the review of Malink (2013) for various understandings of Aristotle's notion of priority in nature. I here accept, without argument, the traditional understanding, which has been discussed and criticized by Peramatzis. As far as the argument of this chapter is concerned, the same results could be attained, in a more roundabout way, by accepting Peramatzis's interpretation and making the necessary adjustments.

[3] In the *Physics*, we find priority in nature not so closely connected to priority in substance: 'A thing is said to be prior to other things when, if it is not, the others will not be, whereas it can be without the others; and there is also priority in time and priority in substance (*κατ'οὐσίαν*)' (*Phys.* viii 7, 260b17–19).

(*Cat.* 7, 8a28–34).[4] So, for instance, slaves and masters are relatives, since there are no slaves without masters and no masters without slaves, and, moreover, to provide an account (a λόγος) of the one requires mentioning, at least implicitly, the other. Tracing this same thought a bit further, one might say that the goodness of substance is prior to the goodness of non-substance in the way that relatives are posterior to substances. That is, just as nothing is a slave without first being some particular human being, a substance, perhaps no quality or relative is good, thinks Aristotle, without there being a good substance realizing that quality. To begin again with a favourable illustration, one might say that the virtues are good, but that a given virtue, like courage, is good only when it is realized by a good human being, like Socrates. Thus, on this approach, one might attempt, in effect, to allow the priority relations among predications of goodness to supervene on the priority relations of the categories. This yields the following argument, also close to the text, but now a bit more expansive:

(1) Beings in the category of substance (οὐσίαι) are called good.
(2) Beings in the categories of (a) quality (ποιός) and (b) relative (πρός τι) are called good.
(3) Substances are prior in nature (πρότερον κατὰ φύσιν) to qualities and relatives.
(4) If substances are prior in nature to the other categories of being, and if φ is predicated of substances and beings in the other categories of being, then the φ substances are prior to the φ non-substances.
(5) So, good things are related as prior and posterior.

The conclusion of this mildly expanded argument then provides all the reason we might need to accept our second premiss, namely that good things are arranged in a series. It might be a short series, beginning with substances and ending with non-substances, but a short series is a series all the same. In any event, this is just what Aristotle seems to imply when he explicates the priority of substances with regard to relatives by noting that 'the latter seems like an offshoot coincident with what is [*scil.* with the former, namely substance, or οὐσία]' (*EN* i 6, 1096a22–23).

Unfortunately, this suggestion advances the discussion but little. To begin, it is unclear why the case of virtue, if it is itself a suitable illustration of the contention Aristotle is meaning to advance here, should be thought to generalize. If we consider a slave named Marcus, we might predicate pallor of him in at least two ways, by saying (i) 'Marcus is pale.' or (ii) 'The slave is pale.' One feels no inclination,

[4] Closer to Aristotle's actual formulation: x is a relative (πρός τι) $=_{df}$ what it is for x to be F is the same as what it is for x to stand in R to y. The locution 'what it is for x to be F' implies the notion of an essence-specifying account.

however, to think that the second predication is somehow unlike the first, or still less to think that it is posterior to it. Pallor is pallor, and both instances of its predication, both equally in the category of quality, seem plainly on par.

Indeed, Aristotle himself seems to concede precisely this point when averring that whiteness is predicated univocally irrespective of its subject. This he does when setting a dilemma as a rejoinder to a Platonic response to his basic argument against the univocity of goodness. He imagines a Platonist complaining that the Academic view is restricted to intrinsic goods, such that only things good in their own right are univocally good (goods *καθ' αὑτά*). On this approach, the Form of the Good corresponds univocally only to intrinsic predications of goodness (*EN* i 6, 1096b7–13). Aristotle's response:

> Which goods should one regard as goods in their own right (*καθ' αὑτά*)? Those pursued even when considered individually, like intelligence, seeing, certain pleasures, and honours? For even if we pursue these because of something else, one would nonetheless regard them as goods in their own right. Or is nothing good in its own right beyond the Idea (*ἰδέα*) <of the Good>? If the latter, the Form (*εἶδος*) <of the Good> will be otiose. If the former, and these are counted as among things good in their own right, then the account of goodness (*τὸν τἀγαθοῦ λόγον*) in all of them will need to be shown to be the same, just as the account of whiteness is the same in snow and in white lead. (*EN* i 6, 1096b16–24)

So, whiteness remains univocal irrespective of its subject of predication, and so, presumably, remains univocal when predicated of Marcus (the slave), and the slave (Marcus). This remains true even if we are perfectly content to agree that since a slave is a relative (a *πρός τι*), nothing is a slave without first being a human being (an *οὐσία*), and indeed even if we regard substances and relatives as standing in some discernible priority–posteriority relation. In sum, φ-entities can be ordered as prior and posterior, without being prior and posterior qua-φ. Consequently, if this approach correctly explicates Aristotle's appeal to the categories in this connection, then he appears guilty of either conflating subjects of predications with the predications of which they are subjects or wrongly presuming priority–posteriority relations obtaining between subjects of predications to determine supervening priority–posteriority relations among their predications.

One might grant this, and still hold out hope for Aristotle's argument. For the case of goodness may seem more complicated. If we say (i) Marcus is good, we seem to say something unlike what we say when we say (ii) the slave is good. We may, that is, implicitly be presuming that the predicate '…is good' in these applications functions in the manner denominated by Geach as implicitly attributive.[5]

[5] Geach (1956, 65). For a fuller discussion of Geach, see § 4.4.

According to Geach, every sentence of the structure: '*x* is good' is implicitly an abridged sentence of the form '*x* is a good φ' where φ is some sortal or other. Thus, '*a* is good', when said of Abe the baker, means, assuming various contextual facts, 'Abe is a good baker', from which we could not infer that Abe was a good father or a good driver or, most generally, a good man. In Geach's view, this is a completely general phenomenon.[6] Indeed, in his rather extreme appeal to the attributive-predicative distinction, the predicate '…is good' is always spurious: 'There is no such thing as being just good or bad, there is only being a good or bad so and so.' There is no such thing, that is, as a purely predicative '…good.'

If something like this contention is underlying Aristotle's reservations about the univocity of goodness, then (on the assumption that there is something to Geach's contention) turnabout would now be fair play. For Aristotle might now reasonably protest that it is the Platonist who only haphazardly generalizes; perhaps it is true that whiteness predicates univocally of the categories, but this would by itself give us no reason to suppose that goodness follows suit. On the contrary, if all goodness is attributive goodness, then all goodness would be sortally bound, such that the full range of intrinsic goods, however many they may be, will be good in distinct ways. On this assumption, there simply would be no general predicate goodness whose essence-specifying account might prove upon analysis, as the Platonist presumes, to be univocal. In this goodness would contrast with whiteness, such that whiteness might prove univocal when predicated across the categories while goodness simply could not be so predicated—there being, in point of fact, no such predicate.

Although some of Aristotle's remarks may tend in this direction (so, e.g. *EN* i 7, 1097b), we cannot say that he has drawn Geach's distinction in any clear or direct way. Be that as it may, we seem in the face of such a contention to have reached an unproductive stalemate. If Aristotle, or an Aristotelian (or a Geachean), wishes to insist that there is no such predicate as '…being good' and so, trivially, no such univocal predicate as '…being good', then the Platonist seems well within her rights to demur. At the very least nothing in Aristotle's anti-Platonic argument of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 offers any compelling or even clear support for such a contention. In view of that, although the Platonist could not continue blithely to assume univocity, neither should she capitulate. What is needed, then, is some manner whereby to adjudicate disputed contentions to univocity for the range of intrinsic goods. Neither side, at this juncture, has an easy way forward.

Taking that all together, we can see that the second premiss of Aristotle's simple anti-Platonic argument, that good things are related as prior and posterior, is at best inconclusive. Indeed, without some ancillary support, it hardly merits consideration. With the ancillary support it may reasonably expect from the doctrine

[6] We will find occasion to doubt this in § 4.4.

of categories, this premiss does raise some provocative issues. It does not, however, settle these issues decisively in Aristotle's favour. On the contrary, the best thing that can be said so far on its behalf is that it raises some issues which the Platonist might be fairly asked to address.

This finding may seem so far underwhelming, since one would like to move more rapidly into a position where the argument from a series of goods might be more finally appraised. If apt, however, this finding shows that any such final appraisal is premature.

Indeed, one might note, any such appraisal would be not only premature but in fact woefully so: despite the argument's extreme simplicity, we have so far managed to consider just one of its two premisses. Moreover, the premiss so far considered, in stark contrast to the first premiss of the argument, is itself relatively simple. The first premiss, recall, is far more general, and not meant to involve any idiosyncratic features of goodness as such: where things φ_1, $\varphi_2 \ldots \varphi_n$ are related as prior and posterior (*πρὸτερον καὶ ὕστερον*), there is no Form φ-ness set over them. Recall further that this is a premiss to which the Platonists, as Aristotle represents them, have already acceded.

Why might they have done so? Here *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 provides not even a hint of an answer. Fortunately, a partially parallel passage in *Eudemian Ethics* i 8 goes a good deal further.

3.3 Series: Before and After

In the fuller discussion of the *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle makes several points omitted from the more compact statement of the argument in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6. The text is unfortunately in a somewhat distressed state, but it is nonetheless clear in its essential contentions:

> Further, in things having a prior and a posterior (*τὸ πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον*), there is no common element beyond these (*παρὰ ταῦτα*), something separate (*χωριστόν*) from them, for then there would be something prior to the first; for the common and separate element would be prior, because with its destruction the first would be destroyed as well; e.g. if the double is the first of the multiples, then the universal multiple cannot be separate, for it would be prior to the double…if the common element turns out to be an Idea, the sort of thing it would be if one were to make the common thing separate. For if justice is good, and so also is bravery, there is then, they say, a good itself (*αὐτό τι ἀγαθόν*)—for which reason they add 'itself' (*αὐτό*) to the common account (*τὸν λόγον τὸν κοινόν*). But what would this amount to, except that it is eternal and separate? But what is white for many days is no whiter than that which is white for a single

> day; so the good will not be any more good by being eternal. Hence, the common good is not identical with the Idea, for the common good belongs to all (*EE* i 8, 1218a1–15).

The statement of the argument here is noteworthy for its contrasts no less than for its similarities to the parallel passage in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6. Most importantly, here Aristotle makes some effort to explain what is meant to be problematic about there being a Form postulated over a series. Although unlike the treatment given in the *Nicomachean Ethics* there is no representation of the first premiss as ad hominem, we now, crucially, are given some grounds for supposing there are no Forms over series: a common Form, if separate (*χωριστόν*) from the entities over which it is set, would, precisely because separate, 'be something prior to the first' element of the series. Here, however, the first premiss of the argument is not stated expressly at all; but it is clear that Aristotle has the same premiss in view.

The argument as given in the *Eudemian Ethics* is tantalizing, but once again a bit elusive. Its exact structure is, unfortunately, more suggested than stated. One may begin by noting three discrete contentions not mentioned in the *Nicomachean Ethics* but introduced overtly here: the Idea is described as (i) something common (*κοινόν*), and (ii) as something beyond or beside the members of the series (*παρὰ ταύτα*), and (iii) as something separate (*χωριστόν*). Here, one must proceed with care: the contention that the Form is something beyond or beside (*παρά*) is not the same its being separate (*χωριστόν*).[7] The latter, but not the former, implies a capacity for independent existence. In Aristotle's idiom, being beside or beyond (*παρά*) something suggests only that the item so described is not the same as any item in the set or indeed with the entire series taken in its entirety. This is consistent with its being existentially dependent on those items, and so with its not being, in the terms of the version of the argument given in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, prior in nature (*πρὸτερον κατὰ φύσιν*) to them. By contrast, the non-pleonastic addition of 'something separate (*χωριστόν*) from them' (or, more simply, 'and this is separate'; *καὶ τοῦτο χωριστόν*; *EE* i 8, 1218a1), adds the thought that Forms are more than merely distinct: they are also prior in nature at least in the sense of being able to exist independently.

Aristotle may reasonably ascribe to the Platonists just such a view. Indeed, for our purposes, we may grant that the Platonists hold, just as Aristotle represents them as holding, a full panoply of realist views about the Form of the Good. They hold, on this representation, that the Form of the Good exists; that it is common

[7] This is well illustrated in Fine (1984) and (1993). Aristotle is quite clear that a core source (perhaps *the* core source) of difficulty for Plato results from his commitment to separation. So, for instance, in comparison with Socrates, who equally sought out universal definitions: 'Nevertheless, Socrates surely never separated them from particulars; and in not separating them, he thought rightly' (*Met.* M 9, 1086b3–5). That he thought rightly, Aristotle insists, can be appreciated by observing how those who do separate universals from particulars, the Platonists, go awry (*Met.* M 9, 1086b3–5).

(κοινόν) to all good things; that it is set over (ἐπί) the good things there are; that it is univocally predicated of the good things to which it is common; that it is paradigmatic for them; that it is a formal cause of the goodness of the good things it is set over; and, most pertinently in the present context, that it is separate (χωριστόν) from them, and so capable of existing without them, though they are dependent upon it for their existence as good things (cf. *Met*. *M* 4, 1078b16, *M* 9, 1086a25). They hold, that is, that the Form of the Good is a non-natural, non-disjunctive, non-reductive, mind- and language-independent entity which is essentially and context-invariantly, what it is, namely the good itself—or, as Aristotle chides the Platonists for holding (*EN* i 6, 1096a33–1096b2), it is goodness in its own right (ταγαθὸν καθ' αὑτό).[8]

Aristotle's complaint in the present context is simple: even the Platonists deny that any such Form φ exists where a series of φ-things is concerned. What precisely, though, is the problem for series? Although this is an occasional trope of Aristotle's,[9] and although it is clear that at least in some cases he represents the Platonists as concurring in this judgement, it is not clear why they should—or, indeed, in terms of the surviving Platonic corpus, that they in fact do. Let us, though, waive this last consideration, and assume, as seems suitable, that Aristotle is here representing them fairly and accurately.

On this assumption, we may ask: what is the precise problem about a series of goods? What, in particular, does the *Eudemian Ethics* add to the picture given by the *Nicomachean Ethics*? Here is a reasonable first conjecture:[10]

> …we are provided with what the ad hominem argument of the *Nicomachean Ethics* did not and did not formally need to provide, a demonstration of the general premiss about P-series [*scil.* a series of entities arranged by some priority-posteriority relation]. It is this. In such a series one of the terms is first in the order of priority (for example, the double in a series of multiples); but if there were a separate Idea (say, multiplicity) which embraced this series it would be prior to all the terms, so that what had ex hypothesi been first would no longer be first. The simplicity of this demonstration must not make us suspect it: it is perfectly valid, since according to the theory of Ideas the Idea would have to rank as one of the terms of the series.

[8] See § 1.1 for Plato's commitments regarding the Form of the Good.

[9] He advances similar considerations regarding: the better and the worse (*EN* i 6, 1096a19–35; *EE* i 8, 1218a1–8); the capacities of the soul (*DA* ii 3, 414b19–415a11); citizens and constitutions (*Pol*. iii 1, 1275a34–38); and, in a passage to which he here draws our attention in our passage from *EN* i 6, to numbers (*Met*. B 3, 999a6–10). We do not come away with a clear notion of the sort of series here envisaged, nor even of the sort of priority-posteriority relation he (or he, together with the relevant Platonists) have in view. On the contrary, we have a sort of motley.

[10] Lloyd (1962, 70).

*A*ccording to this approach, Aristotle suggests that if a Form φ were both beyond ($\pi\alpha\rho\acute{\alpha}$) and separate from ($\chi\omega\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\nu$) the members of a φ series, then 'there would be something prior to the first' member of the series.

We can offer the following expansion:

(1) If *a, b, c*... *n* are arranged as prior and posterior, then there is a φ set over them only if it is prior to the entire series.
(2) If φ is prior to the entire series, then it is also prior to each of its members.
(3) So, if (2), then φ will be prior to *a*, the first member of the series.
(4) If φ is prior to *a*, then *a*, the first member of the series *a, b, c*... *n* will be posterior to φ.
(5) If *a*, the first member of the series *a, b, c*... *n*, is posterior to φ, then *a* will not be the first member of the series.
(6) So, if there is a Form φ over the series *a, b, c*... *n*, *a* will and will not be the first item in that series.
(7) So, there is no Form φ set over the series *a, b, c*... *n*.
(8) To this we may add the categorial appeal of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, thereby applying this result to goodness.
(9) The categories of being form a series arranged as prior and posterior.
(10) If (9), then if goodness is predicated across the categories, predications of goodness will form a series.
(11) So, there is no Form φ set over the categories. (7, 9)
(12) So, there is no single Form, Goodness, set over the series of goods predicated across the categories.

That is, 'what had ex hypothesi been first would no longer be first.'

It behoves us to lay out the expanded form of the argument in this way, since it lays bare where this approach goes awry. While a simple, valid argument would be most welcome in the context, it takes little effort to see that the argument here expanded is neither. The question of simplicity is partly a function of its clarity and directness, but we can see that we have already come a good distance from the simple two-premiss argument of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. As for validity, the matter is more complex.

It would, perhaps, be useful if some such argument could be shown valid, because then we would have a good reason to see why the Platonists might have agreed, as Aristotle represents them as having agreed, to there being a problem about Forms for series. After all, the strong implication seems to be that this would be a special problem, one attending to members of a series, or more broadly for members standing in priority-posteriority relations, which is not also a problem for level-specific kinds, that is, kinds like various species under the genus animal. Thus, for instance, if nothing which is a human is any more or less a human than any other human, then we would expect the Platonist to posit a

Form of Humanity, arrayed over those humans, even if, for the reasons currently under exploration, she demurred for level-ordered kinds, like numbers. One virtue of the expansion of the argument offered is precisely that it has this result: it reveals, if sound, a problem for Forms for series which is not also a problem for level-specific kinds. It locates a contradiction by making the (putatively) first member of a series both first and not first in that series.

Unfortunately, the argument as expanded has no such consequence: it is invalid.[11] The problem is due to an equivocation on the notion of priority. One notion of priority we may term 'sequential-priority'. On this notion, priority is given by a sort of successor function, such that, for instance, any given natural number is prior to the one which follows it, and then, by transitivity, to every subsequent number in the series. This is a far cry from the notion of priority to which Aristotle has appealed in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, namely priority in nature (*κατὰ φύσιν*), which we have glossed in terms of an asymmetrical implication of existence. More to the point, the notion of priority in nature is at play in the first three premisses of our expanded argument. This, then, must be the sense of (4), in which the first member of a given series will be (along with every other member of the series) posterior to the postulated Form set over them. The notion of priority required for (5), however, shifts abruptly to sequential priority: nothing can be first in a series if it is sequentially posterior to another member of the series. Nothing, however, precludes a first member (like any other member) of a series from being posterior in nature to a postulated universal set over it. Given, then, that we have distinct notions at play in the argument—neither of which entails the other—the expanded version equivocates, and so turns out to be invalid.

A Platonist may then say that the putative contradiction recorded in (6) is simply false, so that there will be no contradiction involved in the postulation of a Form for series. What (6) concludes is just this: So, if there is a Form φ over the series *a, b, c…n*, *a* will and will not be the first item in that series. The Platonist will now rightly reject (6), because *a* will after all be the first member in the series. This first member of the series *a, b, c…n* will indeed be posterior to the postulated Form set over the series; but this posteriority will be posteriority in nature (*κατὰ φύσιν*). Hence, to avoid a manifest equivocation, (4) will now have to read:

[11] Hardie (1980, 55) credits J. L. Austin with identifying an equivocation similar to the sort of equivocation characterized in the text: 'Thus, in order to make sense of the argument, it would be necessary to say that one, or perhaps nought, and not two, is the first term of the numerical series. But the argument is anyhow invalid, and the alleged contradiction does not arise, for a reason which was pointed out in a lecture by J. L. Austin. The assumption of the separate Idea would lead to the contradiction only if the Idea would be prior to the first term of the series in the sense of being its immediate predecessor. But the Idea would be prior not to the first term of the series but rather to the series as a whole'. For a variety of understandings of the form of priority in view here, see also Robin (1908, 154 and 612), Wilson (1904), Cherniss (1944, 300 and 513), Joachim (1951, 31), Gauthier and Jolif (1959) *Tome II* (37).

(4*) If φ is prior in nature to *a*, then *a*, the first member of the series *a, b, c…n* will be posterior in nature to φ.

and (5) will turn out false. (5) holds that if *a*, the first member of the series *a, b, c…n*, is posterior to φ, then *a* will not be the first member of the series. For *a* can be posterior in nature to φ, even while *a* is the first in a sequence ordered in terms of sequential priority. It follows then that (6) cannot be derived: it is not the case that if there is a Form φ over the series *a, b, c…n*, *a* will and will not be the first item in that series.

In any event, this is what a Platonist can and should say in response to the expanded argument of the *Eudemian Ethics*. There is simply no contradiction derivable from the commitments ascribed to the Platonist thus far; and there is thus no reason for her to concur with the judgement that there is a special problem about goodness. Indeed, the arguments offered thus far invite rejoinders on all fronts. First, good things do not seem to be ordered in any discernible sequential-priority order. In this, good things do not seem relevantly like the number series to which Aristotle likens them. Indeed, they seem, on the contrary, unlike the number series in this respect. Second, any priority-posteriority relation which may seem to obtain between members of a sequence and a Form φ set over them fails to generate anything approaching a contradiction forcing the abandonment of Platonic realism as characterized. So far, then, Aristotle's polemics seem unjustified. Or, more mildly, nothing justifying Aristotle's confidence regarding the security of his anti-Platonic conception of goodness is readily ascertainable from the texts in which he articulates them.

3.4 Conjectural Expansions

This result may seem in various ways unhappy. If Aristotle's polemics are hollow, then perhaps his anti-Academic postures about goodness should simply be set aside. Perhaps, then, we should revert to the earlier finding of Cook Wilson, who concluded that the discussion of Forms in *Eudemian Ethics* i 8 'is an entire misunderstanding'?[12]

The point at issue in our discussion is this: why do the Platonist's reservations about Forms set over series present a special problem for good things? As we have seen, this issue breaks down into a variety of sub-issues, each involving its own constraints. On the one hand, we would like to respect the report that the

[12] Wilson (1904, 256 n. 1): 'Eudemus' attempt to explain this case in *Eud. Eth.* I. viii, where he reproduces *Nic. Eth.* I. vi, 1096a17 *sqq.*, is an entire misunderstanding'. (Wilson is here assuming, as was common in his day, that the *Eudemian Ethics* was not by Aristotle, but by Aristotle's pupil, Eudemus of Rhodes.)

Academics themselves acknowledged a special problem about Forms set over series. Unless he is knavishly duplicitous, it seems prima facie unlikely that Aristotle would make up such a report out of whole cloth.[13] Indeed, the tenor of the argument of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 seems to be just this: now that the Academics have *already* agreed to there being a problem about Forms set over series, they need now only to be shown that predications of goodness stand in a sufficiently clear priority-posteriority relation to qualify as relevantly series-like. So, it would be sensible to accept Aristotle's report as basically apt. Still, on the other hand, we would not wish to determine in advance that the Platonists faced an insurmountable objection in this regard, especially as regards the univocity of goodness. Surely, in any case, we are not entitled to any such conclusion before coming to terms with the argument which Aristotle is here alluding to but not reproducing. We are in effect invited to peer into the Academy to witness a discussion we cannot hear. Without the benefit of this information, we are unlikely to come to determinate answers about the force of Aristotle's criticisms.

That acknowledged, it may yet be that we have the resources in Aristotle's texts to offer some conjectural expansions of his objection.[14] So, we may yet discover a plausible but non-devastating argument against Plato, one which registers a legitimate philosophical objection against the Form of the Good, but one to which Plato may upon reflection have the resources to reply.

We start with the simple observation, already mooted, that Aristotle is arguing ad hominem in the version advanced in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, that the Platonists cannot, under pain of contradiction, accept a Form of the Good, that doing so violates their own strictures regarding the existence of Forms set over series. One may then ask: why are the Platonists constrained to hold both that good things form a series *and* that there are—by their own lights—no Forms set over things arranged in series. They are, in effect, according to Aristotle, on the assumption that they are committed to a Form of the Good, constrained to accept each of the following three propositions which, unfortunately, form an inconsistent triad:

(1) For φ-things (good things) arranged in a series, there is no Form φ-ness set over them.
(2) These φ-things (good things) are arranged in a series.
(3) There is a Form φ-ness (the Form of the Good) set over these φ-things (good things).

[13] Taylor (1914), like Burnet (1914) sought to distinguish, perhaps too sharply, those passages in which Aristotle reports what Plato asserted from those which try to represent what he meant, or must have meant, and can plausibly be understood as having meant, in short, then, between plain ascriptions and interpretations. If their distinction is impossible to enforce across the board, they remain right that we should at least appreciate the difference in character between direct ascriptions and interpretative characterizations. Here Aristotle appears closer to a straightforward ascription than to any manner interpretation.

[14] These reconstructions supersede the conjectural reconstruction attempted in Shields (2018).

We have so far not seen any path towards convicting them of a contradiction given in terms of priority and posteriority.

Now, we are accepting that the Platonists assent to some version of (1), though we have not yet found a clearly articulated reason for doing do. Two conjectures which at first seem unrelated, but then prove to form a pair, provide one way forward, though, again, it bears emphasizing that both *are* conjectures: (i) there are Forms only for entities falling into what we may call a *flat species*; and (ii) series implicate themselves in *ideal numbers*, where ideal numbers are themselves incapable of being ordered at all, and are therefore not available to provide ordinality to the phenomenal sets exhibiting various different cardinalities over which they are set. We may consider each of these in turn.

We may begin with the first conjecture, that entities arranged in a series do not have Forms arrayed over them, because only flat species merit Forms. Let a 'flat' species be a species that has a single Form predicated univocally over every single member of that species, where such species, when falling under a common genus with other flat species, are differentiated from one another by some manner of differentia. So, for instance, the species *human being* is a flat species, and is differentiated from the species *dog* and the species *cat* falling under the genus, animal, by the differentiae *being rational*. Here, then, we allow that there is a single Form under which all human beings fall.

Compare this flat species with a graduated series, such as the natural numbers. Each number follows upon its predecessor by some simple successor function. One might, owing to some attraction to a one-over-many principle,[15] proceed to suppose that there must be a single species *being a natural number*, which all the naturals have in common. Here, to be precise, the One-Over-Many principle holds:

- (OM): If $a_1 \ldots a_n$ are all univocally φ, then there is something, φ-ness, set over them.[16]

We might then, in line with this formulation, ask: what, precisely, do the members have in common such that there is some φ predicated univocally of them?

[15] Aristotle several times maintains that Plato argues for Forms by means of a one-over-many assumption (*APo.* i 11, 77a5–9; *Met*. A 9, 990b8–17, M4, 1079a7–19).

[16] This is a pared-back formulation in keeping with what we find in Alexander: 'If each of the many humans is a human, and each of the many animals an animal, and similarly in the other cases, and if in the case of each, nothing is predicated of itself though there is something which is predicated of all of them, and it is not the same as any of them, then there must be something besides (παρά) the particulars, something eternal (ἀίδιον) separated (κεχωρισμένον) from them. For it is always predicated in the same way of each of the numerically interchanging particulars. But that which is a one over many (ἕν ἐστιν ἐπὶ πολλοῖς), both separated from them and eternal, is an Idea. Therefore, there are Ideas' (*Comm. in Aris. Met.* 80.8–81.10).

What is it that the naturals have in common? It seems to be just this: each number occupies a place in the series, one generated by the successor function operating on the number immediately previous in the series. Put perhaps cumbersomely, then, each natural number has the property of being-φ, where being-φ is *occupying a place in the series generated by a successor function operating on the immediately previous item in that series*. So, applying the one over many to the items in the series, we might expect a Form, φ-ness, namely the Form of being a natural number.[17]

Now, we are operating on the assumption that Aristotle's report to the effect that the Platonists themselves do not wish to countenance Forms for graduated series of this sort is accurate and non-polemical. Since, however, they *do* want to accept Forms for flat species, there must be a relevant difference in their own minds, a difference requiring a Form in one and precluding one in the other. It seems, on this approach at least, to follow that the application of OM is to be permitted in one case and denied in the other. Why might that be?

One easy thought, then, is that the first member of the series lacks precisely φ, so construed, and so would turn out not to be a natural number; but if it is not a natural number, then it is not such that the successor function could operate on it so as to generate a successor. So, there seem to be troubles on down the line.

There are various things one might say in response, but one of them should not be that the correct analysis of φ might be that a natural number is either first *or* such that it occupies a place in the series generated by a successor function operating on the immediately previous item in that series; for then we will have violated univocity by introducing a disjunctive definition in place of a non-disjunctive definition. Perhaps one could respond that the proper univocal definition is that each member of the series *occupying a place in the series generating by a successor function a next item in the series.* That would have at least the advantage of being non-disjunctive, and, even in an infinite series, of being extensionally adequate.

[17] Compare Frege (1950, § 10): 'The numbers, moreover, are related to one another quite differently from the way which the individual specimens of, say, a species of animal are. It is in their nature to be arranged in a fixed, definite order of precedence; and each one is formed in its own special way and has its own unique peculiarities, which are specially prominent in the cases of 0, 1, and 2. Elsewhere when we establish by induction a proposition already, merely from the definition of the concepts of the species, of a whole series of its common properties. But with the numbers we have difficulty in finding even a single common property which has not actually to be first proved in common'. Several points are apposite in thinking about the Platonist situation with regard to (OM). Frege provides some reason for thinking that the Platonists would be right not to apply (OM) directly to the numbers, thereby to derive the Form *being a number*. Still, he is willing to say that the numbers have a nature (*scil.* to be arranged in a fixed, definite order), and also at least allows that it may be possible to prove commonality, as opposed simply to read it off a displayed species. Looked at one way, then, he provides grist for Aristotle's report regarding the Platonists' reluctance to postulate Forms for series; looked at another way, though, he suggests the opposite, in effect mainly marking the difference between what we have called a flat species and a graduated series. Here it is also worth noting that Frege's remark occurs in the middle of a discussion of what can be known by induction.

This approach would then also have the further advantage of pointing to the reason why a Platonist might be at least disinclined to accept the existence of Forms for items arrayed in a series, while, again, allowing them Forms for flat species.[18] For the Platonist may now come to face a novel difficulty, if, at any rate, she also subscribes to a second thesis, one widely thought to be authentically Platonic, namely the thesis of self-predication. For these two together do point to a problem, even though they do not corporately generate any immediate contradiction. As its name implies, self-predication in one way or another involves accepting the thesis that for any Form φ-ness, φ-ness is φ. That thesis has, however, been variously formulated,[19] and has at best only a mild and indeterminate support in Plato's dialogues for any particular precise formulation.[20] In its clearest and most unapologetic formulation it holds precisely what it says it holds, namely that forms are predicates—here understood as universal properties—which exemplify themselves. Thus:

- (SP) The Form φ has the property of being-φ

Formulated this way, it seems plain that (SP) holds of some Forms necessarily—again construed as universal properties and assuming a broad range of Forms for purposes of illustration. For instance, the Form *Being Abstract* is itself necessarily abstract and so necessarily subject to (SP). By that same necessity, however, (SP) cannot hold of certain other Forms, the Form *Being Concrete*, for instance, which cannot itself be concrete. Still other Forms might in principle be contingently subject to (SP): perhaps the Form *Being Bertrand Russell's favourite Form* is today Bertrand Russell's favourite Form, though yesterday his favourite Form was, as he in fact sometimes indicated, the Form *Beauty*.

If we now join (SP) and (OM), the thesis that if $a_1 \ldots a_n$ are all univocally φ, then there is something, φ-ness, set over them, to our essence-specifying account of being a number, namely occupying a place in the series generated by a successor function of a next item in that series, then we do approach contradiction, even though we do not quite cross that threshold. For now the Form set over the series of the naturals will, by (SP), itself have the property of occupying a place in

[18] Possibly, however, any attempt to specify the wanted successor function would appeal perforce to some manner of *numerical* successor function, which would then render the approach circular; whether, though, this would be a problematic kind of circularity awaits a further discussion.

[19] The best overview of the full range of interpretations, coupled with a rich methodological discussion of how we may begin to adjudicate the various alternatives, can be found in Cohen and Keyt (1992). For a rigorous stand-alone formulation, see Cohen (1971).

[20] For a full, sympathetic overview of Plato's commitment to self-predication, though limited to the early and middle dialogues, see Malcolm (1991). For a discussion extending through the full corpus, and so including, crucially, the Parmenides, see Apolloni (2011). While some of Apolloni's interpretations are unduly deflationary, he provides an excellent overview of the many interpretations of self-predication available. The version adumbrated in the text is, by design, meant to be literal and narrow.

the series the members of which each generate by a successor function the next member in that series. This is not yet a contradiction, because so far, in principle, one of the members in that series could be set over all the others. Yet that now introduces a further wrinkle, since that entity too would be a number, but yet it could not be, since by (SP) it must itself be a universal. Now, though, if one number is a universal, and all numbers are the same in kind, it would seem to follow that all numbers are universals. It is now, though, hard to understand how such universals could constitute a series: the numbers now seem rather to constitute a flat series, where the prospect of their standing in relation to one another by some means of successor function becomes difficult to fathom.

This, though, invites consideration of our second, related conjecture, regarding the ways in which Plato may have conceived of numbers. We say 'may have' because most of the data for the ascription of ideal numbers to Plato derive from Aristotle. His reports have been variously received and have given rise to an enormous literature regarding the so-called 'unwritten doctrines' of Plato (a general class of which is mentioned in *Phys*. ii 2, 209b14–16), much of which is centred on the question of whether Plato maintained—though, evidently, from the standpoint of his written work, maintained quietly—a thesis to the effect that Forms in some sense are, or are reducible to, numbers.[21]

Aristotle reports that the Platonists accepted two types of number, one of which they regarded as 'inassociable' or 'inaddible' (*ἀσύμβλητοι ἀριθμοί*) and the other, by contrast, which is susceptible to all the standard arithmetic operations.[22] The contrast between these two types of number has been variously understood, partly because our view of Plato's (presumed) motivations for positing them is occluded.[23] Although the state of our evidence is less substantial than we might hope, unclear even on the question of whether we should accept Plato as postulating two or three types of number or three, we may at least distinguish two kinds: namely, *perceptible numbers*, which is to say classes exhibiting some cardinality,

[21] Krämer (2012, esp. 76–78) provides a helpful synopsis of some of the protagonists in this debate.

[22] On this doctrine see Trendelenburg (1826), Zeller (1923), Wilson (1904), Lloyd (1962), Annas (1976, 17–18), and Mohr (1981). The word *ἀσύμβλητος* seems to have several different valences, ranging from 'incomparable' and 'incommensurable' to 'inaddible', where the last indicates the fact that two things are not susceptible to arithmetic operations, as one might say to someone trying to subtract an egg from the number seven, 'Sorry, those are *ἀσύμβλητα*'. (*Top*. i 15, 107b17; *Phys*. vii 4, 248b8, 249a3). This latter is its sense in the discussion of the ideal numbers in *Met*. M 6, commenting on which Ross (1924, vol. ii, 427) reasonably suggests: '*συμβλητα*ί seems to mean "capable of entering into arithmetical relations with one another—of being added and subtracted, multiplied and divided"'. We consider this matter more fully for the non-arithmetic sense of the word in chapter 8.

[23] Ross (1924, vol. ii, 427) thinks that Aristotle only adds to the occlusion: 'You cannot add oneness to oneness because there is only one oneness; and it is equally certain that you cannot add oneness to twoness. And, further Aristotle's notion of numbers as containing units, and in the resulting question whether they are comparable or incomparable, is equally mistaken. The number 2 does not contain two numbers 1, for there is only one number 1 … The weakness of Aristotle's position is that he believes in mathematical numbers, which do not exist, and does not believe in ideal or universal numbers, which do'.

and *ideal numbers*, which, for our purposes, we may regard as properties, like oneness, twoness, and so forth.[24] Where the first kind of number is concerned, one seems able to subject them to the normal arithmetic operations. As for the second kind, they seem for various reasons—they are simple, they are not the same in kind, they lack 'merely countable parts', they, as universals, are the wrong category of entity for undergoing such operations—not subject to arithmetic operations; they are, in short, categorially unsuited to serving as arguments in arithmetic functions. Although scholars disagree about the precise grounds for their being 'inassociable' or 'inaddible' (*ἀσύμβλητος*),[25] they mainly agree that they are in fact inassociable.

That by itself, though, would not show that they are not subject to (OM), which, if it applies at all, applies at least to flat species. So conceived, however, the Form numbers do seem to constitute a flat species, unless, of course, there is after all nothing common to the various properties in view.[26] They do all seem to have at least one property, though, namely *being a Form number*; even so, as we have seen, specifying the content of that putatively shared feature is a bit tricky.

Whatever their merits, these conjectures proceed on the assumption that Aristotle regards the Platonists as constrained to avoid postulating Forms for items arrayed in a series even though they endorse Forms for items in flat series. There is, however, also one additional possibility, one which is, in comparison with these suggestions, rather deflationary. Perhaps the Platonists do not feel *constrained* to avoid postulations of Forms in these cases so much as simply *disinclined*. That is, perhaps Aristotle means only to report that the Platonists, evidently

[24] The supposed third type would be those Aristotle reports as being 'between' phenomenal and ideal numbers, namely the 'mathematical numbers' (see *Met*. A 6, 1087b14–18; M 5, 1080a12–17).

[25] One may compare, for instance, Mohr (1981) with Annas (1976). Mohr (1981, 621): 'The doctrine briefly is that some numbers are Ideas which do not consist of units and which have no merely countable parts, that is, parts having no other content than their countability: oddness and primeness are each one aspect of three and therefore are countable parts of three; each is not, however, a merely countable part of three. These numbers neither are parts of other numbers nor have other numbers as their parts. Such numbers since they possess no units are not addible or associable or subject to arithmetical calculations. Standing entirely outside each other, the numerical content or differentiation of such numbers is found in their differing positions in a definite serial order of priority and posteriority. The Ideas of numbers are the natural number line'. Annas (1976, 18): 'Form numbers are not combinable in two ways. They cannot be added (or have other mathematic operations performed on them), since there is only on of each, so that "2 × 2 = 4" cannot make reference to the Form number 2. And each is unique of its kind, so that each number is specifically different, and they are not items of the same kind. The second point is what Aristotle means when he says that the Platonists recognized no Form of number [citing *Met*. 999a6–10, 1080b11, 1086a11; *EN* 1096a17]. Numbers are not instances of any common kind: being a number is not some common property shared by all numbers, but is constituted by membership in the number-series. Thus, for Plato Form numbers are specifically different (this being a fact about the number-series and not about Forms as such) as well as not being addible. So for the Form numbers non-combinability comes down to non-addibility and difference in kind'.

[26] Recall Annas (1976, 18), speaking of the idea numbers: 'Numbers are not instances of any common kind: being a number is not some common property shared by all numbers'.

like Frege,[27] simply see no commonality in the case of numbers, or at least no first-order or underived commonality, and see no basis for applying (OM). After all (OM) requires that the items falling under some φ, $a_1 \ldots a_n$, all be univocally φ. Although we have given some reasons for doubting that this is so, it nonetheless remains a possibility, and so may in fact be the Platonists' actual motivation.

As we have seen, however, the evidence regarding this possibility diverges as between *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 and *Eudemian Ethics* i 8, since the latter text offers a good deal more argumentative texture (*EE* i 8, 1218a1–15), whereas the former merely issues a report. We may, though, in closing, revert to the more austere presentation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and consider the possibility that the Platonists have not been forced into this posture so much as voluntarily embraced it. Suppose, then, that the Platonists simply look at the number series and see find no basis for applying (OM). Then Aristotle's argument is still more narrowly ad hominem,[28] though not therefore objectionably so. It is ad hominem, however, in at least the sense that Aristotle himself would be free to deny (1), even while ascribing it fairly and accurately to the Platonists, where, again, (1) states: where things φ_1, $\varphi_2 \ldots \varphi_n$ are related as prior and posterior (*πρὸτερον καὶ ὕστερον*), there is no Form φ-ness set over them. (An atheist might argue to his theist companion that her God is wicked: You yourself maintain that God knowingly and willingly created *everything*; since there is evil, God knowingly and willingly created that evil, and, obviously, anyone who knowingly and willingly creates something evil is wicked.) Or perhaps Aristotle might himself accept (1) as well, calling attention to it on this occasion, though, simply to force the Platonists into an awkward position, given *their* acceptance of it.

In either case, if we accept the thought that the Platonists embraced (1) of their own volition and not because they had been cajoled into accepting it, we find that Aristotle's argument remains problematic. Indeed, this approach puts still more pressure on his argument, to which we may return briefly,[29] because now the second premiss looks still harder to sustain. (2), recall, holds that good things are related as prior and posterior. The question now becomes why, given their predilection for univocity, the Platonists should find this premiss at all enticing.

In fact, two worries crop up in this connection. First, if we are assuming that the Platonists accept (1) without inference, that they simply look at the number series and see no non-derived commonality between the numbers, perhaps supposing that, as Frege says of the numbers, 'each one is formed in its own special way and has its own unique peculiarities',[30] then we are left wondering what compels the Platonists to hold that good things are arranged in any such series. More to the point, we are left wondering why the Platonists should agree that there is

[27] See n. 17. [28] This is a point well appreciated by Lloyd (1962, 70).
[29] We have discussed this premiss in § 3.2.
[30] Frege (1950, § 10). See n. 17 for the full quotation.

nothing common to all good things, or why, moreover, they should agree to this based upon a direct inspection of good things arrayed in a series, as—we are now assuming—this is clear to them regarding the numbers based upon a direct inspection of them.

We should note here that it will not suffice merely to observe that good things are ordinally rankable, that some things are better (more good) and others worse (less good) than others. For this would hold equally of every scalable quality, such as being more or less amusing or angry or courageous or more or less intensely blue, or, for that matter, for all manner of quantitative properties, such as having more or less mass, or being hotter or colder, or larger or smaller, or heavier or lighter. In that case, the Platonist would be barred from positing Forms for any of these, and, to turn the ad hominem table briefly, so too would Aristotle be precluded from identifying common properties or in rebus universals in these cases.

What is needed, in this case, is rather a kind of priority and posteriority directly akin to the numbers, for which case we have, at least, a plain and repeatable successor function. This, then, leads to our second worry about (2). As long as we are still operating on the assumption that the Platonists, left to their own devices, and without the benefit of any compelling argument, would deny univocity for the numbers, we would expect them, under pain of inconsistency, to follow suit for other items arrayed in series, which is, in fact, just what Aristotle reports. Plainly, though, his same report indicates that they did *not* come to any such conclusion regarding good things. Nor is it immediately clear why they should; still less is it clear why they must. In short, treating (1) as more or less obvious makes (2) all the more obscure and perplexing.

If we return to Aristotle's own statement of the argument, it bears repeating that his own reasons for promoting (2) derive directly from his own theory of categories, where he sees forms of priority and posteriority as akin to the number series (*EN* i 6, 1096a17–23). Here there are two subsidiary worries. First, we may doubt whether the forms of priority Aristotle identifies in the categories is suitably analogous to the priority and posterity of the numbers. Second, even on the assumption that this is so, we are once more left wondering why the Platonists should be regarded as beholden to Aristotle's theory of categories, a presumption for which, as we have seen, Eustratius saw fit to castigate Aristotle.[31]

This is not necessarily to say that Aristotle's argument now becomes ad hominem in a bad way.[32] It does, however, base his treatment of priority and posteriority in this argument more firmly on his own theory of categories. This in turn renders the argument incomplete, in that so understood it will need to rely directly on the second argument he offers in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, his categorial argument. Whether or not he is antecedently disposed to accept that second

[31] See § 2. 3. 1. A similar point has been forcefully made in modern times by Santas (1989).
[32] This seems the purport of Santas (1989).

argument, it seems clear that Aristotle's theory of categories poses some striking challenges to Plato's conception of the Good. Accordingly, we turn next to Aristotle's categorial argument.

3.5 Concluding Considerations

By the time we have reached these conjectural expansions, we have travelled a good distance from the simple, two-premiss argument of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6. That simple argument held (i) that there are no Forms set over items arranged in a series; and (ii) that good things are themselves so arranged; with the result that (iii) there is no Form of the Good. When reflecting on the relative complexity of our final conjectures, however, one may note that it is only fair to both the critic and the target of the argument to come to terms with its underlying motivations. As it stands in the text, the argument is too terse to be credited as being any kind of forceful rejection of the Form of the Good; but, again, we cannot therefore conclude that it is hopeless. In order to assess its final force, reconstruction and expansion are unavoidable.

Having offered these expansions and reconstructions, we can see that this is an argument which should give the Platonists a pause. Even so, it is not, or not yet, an argument which Aristotle can promote as decisive against them. As for the complexity of our final formulations, then: we can hardly expect the Academic dialectic pertaining to the metaphysics of goodness to have been anything but complex, however simple and economical those friends of ours who introduced the Forms meant the Form of the Good to be.

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4
Goodness across the Categories

In some ways, the deepest and most difficult argument of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 is the categorial argument (**GAC**) (*EN* i 6, 1096a23–29), which attempts to yoke goodness to being and to infer that since being cannot be predicated univocally across all ten Aristotelian categories, neither can goodness. Here too, although concisely stated, Aristotle's argument proves remarkably complex. This complexity derives in the first instance from the fact that Aristotle's remarks about the homonymy of being are themselves vexed and hotly disputed. So, it is simply not possible to appeal to an established understanding of that doctrine which might then be exported and applied to the case of goodness. Even so, given that being and goodness covary, we can at least use some features of Aristotle's remarks about being across the categories to explicate his attitude towards the non-univocity of goodness. Indeed, although there has been less of an emphasis on the opposite direction, one can perhaps learn some things about the homonymy of being as it pertains to the doctrine of categories from Aristotle's characterizations of goodness in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 and *Eudemian Ethics* i 8.

4.1 The Arguments: One Dominant and One Ancillary

Aristotle's appeal to the doctrine of categories is, on the surface at least, transparent:

> Further, since good is meant in as many ways as being is meant:[1] in [the category of] what something is [*scil.* substance], for instance god and reason (*νοῦς*); in quality, the virtues (*αἱ ἀρεταί*), in quantity, a fitting amount (*τὸ μέτριον*); in relative, the useful (*τὸ χρήσιμον*); in time, the opportune (*καιρός*); in place, an abode

[1] On the rendering of *πολλαχῶς λέγεται* into English see also chapter 1, n. 66. To recall, we should bear in mind that Aristotle means 'meaning' in more than a merely lexical sense. Here one may consult Moore (1993, 6), who makes the relevant point regarding meanings and definitions: 'How is good to be defined? Now it may be thought that this is a verbal question. A definition does indeed often mean the expressing of one word's meaning in other words. But this is not the sort of definition I am asking for. Such a definition can never be of ultimate importance in any study except lexicography. If I wanted that kind of definition I should have to consider in the first place how people generally used the word " good"; but my business is not with its proper usage, as established by custom'. Of course, for both Moore and Aristotle customary usage may yet provide data regarding the sought meaning or meanings; but such customary meaning or meanings are not the meaning or meanings sought.

> (δίαιτα); and other such things <in the other categories>, it is clear that the good cannot be something common, universal, and one (κοινόν τι καθόλου καὶ ἕν). For if it were, it would be predicated meaningfully not in all of the categories, but rather in one only (*EN* i 6, 1096a23–29).

The conclusion appeals to a fact about meaning, of goodness being 'meant' or being 'spoken of' (ἐλέγετο), across the categories and infers therefrom the final thought that the good cannot be something common, universal, and one (κοινόν τι καθόλου καὶ ἕν).

The first clause of the sentence establishes a framework by claiming a covariance of goodness and being: the good is meant in as many ways as being. Since we know that being is meant in many ways, so too must goodness be meant in many ways. This does not report the argument of the text as Aristotle advances it, but it does express an important connection: since goodness is meant in as many ways as being is meant, and being is meant in many ways (λέγεται πολλαχῶς; *Met.* *Γ* 4, 1003a33–34), so too must goodness be meant in many ways.

A neutral reader will naturally wonder two things. First, why suppose that being is meant in many ways?[2] What, moreover, does this claim contend? Second, why suppose that goodness is meant in as many ways as being?

Let us call this second claim the *covariance contention*. When we adhere closely to the passage before us, we see that Aristotle does not argue directly for the covariance contention, beyond offering a series of illustrations of predications of goodness across the categories and then observing that its inter-categorial predicability suffices to show that goodness is non-univocal. In effect, then, we are given a dominant argument followed, very briefly, by an ancillary argument.

The dominant argument is this:

(1) Goodness is meant in many ways (λέγεται πολλαχῶς) if, and only if, being is meant in many ways (λέγεται πολλαχῶς).
(2) Being is meant in many ways (λέγεται πολλαχῶς; *Met.* *Γ* 4, 1003a33–34).
(3) Hence, goodness is meant in many ways (λέγεται πολλαχῶς).

Notice that this argument has a negative conclusion: it does not establish the covariance contention, but rather, and more centrally for Aristotle's ultimate purposes in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, concludes that goodness is *not* univocal.

The bulk of the passage is given over to a series of illustrations of predications of goodness in various categories, followed by an observation concerning the

[2] Or, dropped into its current dialectical context, one may reasonably wonder why the Platonist should acquiesce without comment. Santas urges that she should not (1989, 158 n. 13); he indeed objects to the entire conceit of Aristotle's argument in view of its reliance on an Aristotelian conviction that Plato is keen to reject. See § 2.3.3 for a brief consideration of Santas's concern.

consequences of those illustrations. Together they yield an ancillary argument, which in effect supports (1) of the dominant argument without entailing it. Rather, more strictly, it establishes only half of the covariance thesis, which is to say that it entails (3), an interim conclusion of the dominant argument, namely the claim that goodness is meant in more than one way. The ancillary argument:

(1) The predicate '…is good' is predicated of items in sundry categories, including the categories of substance, quality, relative, time, place, and 'other such things' <in other categories>.
(2) If goodness were univocal, it would be predicated in one category only.
(3) So, goodness cannot be something univocal.

Thus construed, the argument is once again superficially simple. Its complexity surfaces, however, as soon it is asked why being univocal is sufficient for being restricted to predications within a single category. Coming to terms with the argument thus requires our determining two matters, first, the connection between transcategorial predication and univocity, and second, the purport of the illustrations offered. We consider these two matters in the following two sections, taking the second first, turning to the first thereafter.

4.2 Goodness across the Categories: Predicational Approaches

Neither premiss of the ancillary argument of this section is unproblematic, though the first is less difficult than the second. As stated, it simply seems to report a predicational practice: we call items in various categories good. Put slightly more formally, items in diverse categories equally receive the predicate '…is good'. One says 'god is good' and then also 'virtue is good' and so forth. This much may seem uncontroversial; but as we shall see, even this uncontroversial assumption proves to be a source of difficulty.

Before assaying this difficulty, let us agree that this seems the most natural way of taking Aristotle's illustrations.[3] So, we begin with this approach. Taken at face value, Aristotle seems merely to be offering a minimally factive observation. That is, Aristotle first observes our predicational practices and then reports what he sees. His report so far seems on firm ground. We say, for example, that god (θεός) is good and that reason (νοῦς) is good. These are instances of predications of goodness within the category of 'what something is' or substance. We say this sort of thing, as Aristotle notes, but then we also say that this time is good, because it is opportune (καιρός), or that this abode (δίαιτα) is good, for whatever reason we like.

[3] This construal agrees with Ackrill (1977, 17), who holds that this is the 'most obvious' way to take the text. It is not, however the only possible way.

When we speak in these ways, we predicate '…is good' of items in the categories of time and place in addition to our earlier predications in the category of substance. So on for the remaining categories.

Already, though, even within this natural or obvious way of taking Aristotle's examples, we can fathom four very different sorts of underlying motivations for his drawing our attention to these predicational practices. First, Aristotle may simply be making an uncomplicated, unadorned observation to the effect that the predicate '…is good' is predicated of subjects in various categories.[4] Second, he might be after something more technical, as some have supposed,[5] in the direction of essential predication or definitional specification. Although not suggested in any direct way in the text, this sort of restricted predicational reading might be thought to address an inadequacy in the first approach. The same might be said for a third possibility, which treats the predications as importantly distinct because of their relying on distinct criteria of application.[6] Finally, fourth, we might look to Aristotle's own method for uncovering non-univocity in predicational contexts, namely the procedure he outlines in *Topics* i 15.

Let us address each of these approaches in turn.

We start, then, with the thought that the examples in our text are, as they seem to be, straightforward instances of the sorts of predications we make of subjects in various categories. Further, let us suppose our examples are more or less random: among the substances we call good, god and reason spring to mind. We might equally have said that Socrates or souls are good, or that military leaders are good, or that this bumble bee or that statue is good. On this way of thinking, we are simply reporting, as is true, that we predicate goodness of substances, but saying or implying nothing further. On the other hand, we might be illustrating, or attempting to illustrate something not at all random, namely that certain sorts of substances, like god and reason, receive the predicate '…good' among all substances because they are the best sorts of substances. Again, on this approach, we would be saying that among all qualities, the virtues receive the predicate '…are good' because they are especially good qualities, unlike, say, '…is red' or '…is vituperative'. Same again for time, where amongst times the opportune is good, whereas the premature is bad and a trice or an instant is neither good nor bad. While it is not clear that this approach can be fully generalized, one can admit it as a variation of the first approach, which simply reports some practice of ours, random or studied, of predicating '…is good' of items across various categories.

Although they vary in their details, these proposed restrictions have something in common, namely that they take the examples given as simple, uncomplicated

[4] This is the approach reflected very clearly in the original Oxford Translation of Ross (1915), and then also, if in a less pronounced manner, in the Revised Oxford Translation of Barnes (1984). This interpretation is adopted directly in Urmson (1988, 23) and Santas (1989, 150).

[5] This is the approach of Hardie (1980, 56), following Joachim (1962, *ad loc.*).

[6] This interpretation owes to Ackrill (1977).

monadic predications. This simple approach has at least two exegetical advantages. It is, first of all, an entirely natural reading, one very close to the text. It also looks forward in an agreeable way, since the second premiss of our ancillary argument, that if goodness were univocal, it would be predicated in one category only, seems to pair readily with this sort of reading. This simple reading of the first premiss thus flows from the text and leads directly into the premiss which follows.

Unfortunately, so understood Aristotle's ancillary argument is entirely underwhelming. For it seems all too easy to produce counterexamples to the second premiss construed in this simple and direct way.[7] There are plenty of predicates which seem to be predicable of items in various categories in a transparently univocal way. For example, one can predicate of every entity, in every category '…is a member of a category'.[8] It is hard to see how this predicate can be anything but univocal in these applications.

If this sort of made-up predicate is thought to be too artificial, other, more natural predicates are equally available.[9] Thus, one can predicate '…is white' of both a substance and a relative, of Marcus, a human being, and of Marcus, a slave. Or, again, one can predicate '…has mass' of a quantity and a substance, for instance, of 10 kilos of marble and a statue of Aristogeiton. To the likely response that one can predicate 'has mass' of a quantity only if it is already a substance, for instance a statue of Aristogeiton, one may simply reject the contention. A quantity of marble might be a statue of Aristogeiton; but it might be nothing but a quantity of marble, even a quantity of marble still indeed unmined in the side of a quarry. Further, Aristotle is himself perfectly prepared to predicate qualities of qualities, including the qualities they are: 'when someone says, when a white colour is set before him, that what is set before him is white or a colour, he states what it is and signifies a quality' (*Top*. i 9, 103b31–33).[10] He goes on to make the same point about quantities (*Top*. i 9, 103b33–35). So, there seems little point in trying to deny that at least some predicates can be predicated univocally across the categories.

This of course does not entail that all predicates can be predicated univocally across the categories. Perhaps some can and others cannot, and '…is good' is among those that cannot. If this were the thought undergirding Aristotle's categorial argument, one would need some principle for delineating those predicates predicable univocally across the categories from those not so predicable. Perhaps

[7] So Irwin (1981, 539): 'We might as well say that "amusing" or "strange" is multivocal [and hence non-univocal—CS] because both substances and qualities can be amusing or strange'.

[8] Thanks to Travis Butler for this example.

[9] In addition to Irwin (1981, 539), see also MacDonald (1989, 158–159) and especially Woods (1982, 66): 'There seems to be little to be said for the view that "visible" is not applied in the same sense to substances, qualities, quantities, and relations. Aristotle nowhere enunciates such a principle, nor he does not seem to employ it explicitly elsewhere'.

[10] *ὅταν δὲ χρώματος λευκοῦ ἐκκειμένου φῇ τὸ ἐκκείμενον λευκὸν εἶναι ἢ χρῶμα, τί ἐστι λέγει καὶ ποιὸν σημαίνει* (*Top*. i 9, 103b31–33).

such a principle could be articulated, but it is difficult to regiment in advance which predicates are predicable across the categories and which not, unless, of course, we have an already articulated principle of restriction at our disposal. Then, however, we would no longer be in the situation in which we find ourselves at present, of merely noticing and reporting a simple predicational practice whereby a single predicate is predicated of disparate subjects across the categories.

Considerations of this general sort have inclined some readers to suppose that Aristotle's examples are examples not of predication in general, but of a specific sort of predication, namely essential predication.[11] There are several ways one might advance this interpretation, but we may begin with a favourable sort of example. Suppose one predicates '…is good' of god, yielding the statement 'god is good'. It would not be too difficult to observe that god is not merely good, but is in fact essentially good. The value of offering this observation in this context might be that one could then move readily to the thought that as an essential predicate '…is good' is definitional of god, and then indeed one step further still to the thought that '…is good' is here implicitly being thought of as something *identical* with god. Yet if the good is identical with god, and god is a substance, then the good, in this application, must also be a substance. If this same pattern obtains in predications in other categories, then we could conclude that the predicate '…is good' as predicated in the various categories of being simply could not be the same across these applications, because in one instance it would be identical with a substance, and in another a quality (a virtue, ἢ ἀρετή), and in another a place (an abode, ἢ δίαιτα), and so on. Since, necessarily, no substance is quality and no quality is a quantity, and so forth across the categories, the predicate '…is good' must be non-univocal. It signifies different things in different predications.

This interpretation has at least the advantage of attempting to come to terms with the failings of the first predicational interpretation, which, though closer to the text as we have it, succumbs to a fairly direct objection. Unfortunately, the second predicational account fails even more swiftly: it is simply not the case that '…is good' expresses part of the essence of the times or places or relatives or qualities mentioned. The proposal does not generalize beyond the case of substance, and even then it is a bit of a strain. It is utterly unclear why a Platonist, or anyone else, should think that 'reason (νοῦς) is good' expresses an essential predication, that '…is good' is part of the definition of 'reason' (νοῦς). In sum, then, although one can appreciate the need to restrict the predicate in some categorially limiting way, an attempt to salvage the predicational interception by an appeal to essential predication fails.

[11] Hardie (1980, 57) elaborates: Aristotle's examples 'are not simply propositions in which good is a predicate asserted of various subjects; they are definitions. The predicate expresses the essence, or part of the essence, of the subject; and it is, therefore, inevitably in the same category as the subject'.

A more promising strategy treats the predicate '…is good' across the categories as a quality in all cases, but as a straightforwardly non-univocal predicate. Here the suggestion is that we can glean the non-univocity of the predicate by noticing that the criteria on the basis of which it is applied differ from category to category in such a way that the predicate itself cannot be the same in each application.[12] Here the thought may be variously developed,[13] but the basic idea is straightforward: if a predicate '…is φ' is applied to different subjects according to discernibly different criteria of application, then φ is non-univocal in these applications. Thus, to begin again with an example favourable to this approach, if one says that 'Her prose is more safe than stunning' presumably the criterion of application is that her prose is cautious and dull. If, by contrast, one says 'He is safe to secure a third term' or 'They returned safe from a perilous journey' the criteria would be in the first instance his being more or less guaranteed to win and in the latter their being free from harm. Since these criteria of application vary, so too does the significance of the predicate. In these uses, then, '…is safe' is non-univocal.

The same sort of case can be made for '…is good' in Aristotle's applications. The criterion for saying that 'god is good' might be that god is an exemplary kind of substance, while we say 'the virtues are good' because virtues are the best kind of quality and 'an opportune moment is good' because an opportune moment, unlike an unfortunate moment, is the best kind of time. Where the criteria of application of the predicate vary so widely, so too must the meaning of the predicate differ. So, '…is good' differs across these applications. Further, since the criteria are constrained to differ, deriving as they do from distinct categories, we can equally conclude that the variance of criteria is necessary and not contingent. The bare variance of criteria, taken by itself, already commends or even requires the non-univocity of the predicate for which they serve as criteria.

Unfortunately, this development of Aristotle's suggestion, though a promising way to address our initial worry about predicational approaches generally, succumbs to a different sort of problem. To begin, we should note that 'criterion' might be understood in this argument in two very different ways: (i) epistemically, so that when *k* is a criterion of *x*, *k* provides a ground for making a knowledge or belief claim ('One criterion of rancidness in olive oil is a sort of petroleum odour.') or (ii) metaphysically, so that the notion of being a criterion is effectively a point about constitution ('One criterion of adequate reading light is a colour temperature of 3,000–5,000 Kelvin.'). The two approaches yield different arguments, but neither suffices to establish non-univocity.

[12] This is the suggestion of Ackrill (1977). Pritchard (1919, 305) attributes a similar insight to Cook Wilson: 'Aristotle was right in maintaining that ἀγαθά differed ᾗ ἀγαθά. The key to special problems lay in consideration of their special subject matter'.

[13] The discussion in the present text partly abbreviates the fuller discussion in Shields (1999) but supersedes it where the two disagree.

If we suppose that the notion of being a criterion is epistemic, then we can see that difference of criteria of application, even categorially rooted difference of criteria, do not suffice to establish non-univocity. One sort of example involves the predicate '…is hot'.[14] We instruct a child that when the burner on a stove is red, the stove is hot. When we see steam hissing out of a car's engine, we know that the engine is hot. If a cauldron of water is boiling over, we believe its contents are hot. Perhaps if we learn that a hiker is missing in the Mojave desert at noon, we believe that she is in danger because the place where she is lost is hot. Then again, if a piece of metal is too near the fire, we will avoid touching it, because we believe it is hot. These various criteria drawn from different categories of being—quality (being red), place (in the Mojave), relative (near the fire). Yet they do not give us any ground whatsoever to treat the predicate '…is hot' as non-univocal across these applications.

Suppose, however, that the notion of criterion at play in this reconstruction is metaphysical rather than epistemic. Then perhaps the approach is more promising. In some cases, at least, the suggestion seems apt. Consider, for instance, the predicate '…is hard'. What constitutes hardness in the case of stone is density, whereas what constitutes hardness in the case of mathematical problems is difficulty, and what constitutes hardness in personality is being callous and lacking in empathy. Since these are very different qualities—being difficult is not all the same thing as being lacking in empathy, which is not the same thing as being dense, that is, as having a high ratio of mass to volume—it would seem to follow that '…is hard' across these applications is not the same quality. Hence, difference in criterion, metaphysically construed, will after all suffice for non-univocity.

This approach is much more promising, but it too runs into difficulty. Its difficulty is best seen by moving first to the fourth and final predicational interpretation. This final approach has the advantage of deriving most decisively from Aristotle's own stated approach to establishing non-univocity. This is a topic Aristotle takes up in *Topics* i 15. In that chapter he begins by making a point immediately germane to our question about goodness:

> Regarding the number of ways <in which a term is meant>, one should not only treat <the fact that> terms are meant in different ways (*ὅσα λέγεται καθ' ἕτερον τρόπον*) but should also endeavour to provide their definitions (*λόγους*). For instance, <one should not merely note that> justice and courage are said to be good in one way while what is wholesome and what is healthful are said to be good in another, but also that the former are so called because of how they themselves are, whereas the latter are so called because they are productive of

[14] This example derives from MacDonald (1989, 158), to whose treatment of Ackrill's (1977) approach I am indebted.

> something [*scil.* health] and not because of how they themselves are. Similarly also in other cases (*Top*. i 15, 106a1–8).

Aristotle suggests here that one should not merely report the fact that in some cases the predicate '…is φ' is meant in one way and in other cases another, but that for the purposes of conducting dialectic it behoves one to go further, to provide the definitions of the predicates in their sundry applications. In this case, the predicate '…is good' not only attaches to courage and justice in one way, and to the healthful and the wholesome in another, but, as their definitions in these applications will reveal, in the first pair they are predicated as intrinsically good and the latter as instrumentally. This will serve the interests of dialectic, presumably because it will among other things allow us to identify mistakes in argumentation and then also, in a constructive vein, to avoid missteps resulting from conflating distinct meanings of the same predicate.

In the current context, however, the relevant point is that we establish non-univocity in predication by displaying the definitions or accounts (*λογοί*) of terms. So, in the cases at hand, we have four predications of '…is good'.

1. Justice is good.
2. Courage is good.
3. What is wholesome is good.
4. What is healthful is good.

Aristotle does not provide the accounts he mentions, but makes clear that he supposes that when the accounts are displayed, they will at a minimum reveal the following structure:

1. Justice $=_{df} \varphi^{\star}$—where $\varphi^{\star}$ is an intrinsic property of justice.
2. Courage $=_{df} \varphi^{\star\star}$—where $\varphi^{\star\star}$ is an intrinsic property of courage.
3. Wholesome $=_{df} \psi^{\star}$—where $\psi^{\star}$ is a relational property, pointing to the good obtained by the presence of the wholesome.
4. Healthful $=_{df} \psi^{\star\star}$—where $\psi^{\star\star}$ is a relational property, pointing to the good obtained by the presence of the healthful.

Presumably, the good in question in (3) and (4) is health itself. One question regarding the goodness uncovered in (1) and (2) pertains to whether the intrinsic good revealed pertaining to justice and courage is meant to be non-univocal. Aristotle does not need that to be the case for the argument implicitly offered here to succeed, but, as we shall see, he will later in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 argue

for an extremely fine-grained intension for the goodness pertaining even to these intrinsic goods.[15]

Aristotle proceeds in the same chapter to recommend several methods for determining when a predicate '…is *ψ*' is non-univocal. He specifies a whole series of techniques, some highly technical, others rather less so. These include, in summary fashion, adapting the text somewhat, since some of the examples in Greek do not translate readily into English:

- A test of contraries (*Top*. i 15, 10a9–35): If the instances of *φ* in '*a* is *φ*' and '*b* is *φ*' have different contraries then *φ* is non-univocal in these applications. Thus, in one sort of case the difference is obvious, since the opposite of *fine* (*τὸ καλόν*) in 'The house is fine' is 'The house is decrepit' and, similarly the opposite of 'The animal is fine' is 'The animal is ugly'. So, '…is fine' as it is predicated of animals and houses is non-univocal.
- A lack of parallelism of contrariety (*Top*. i 15, 106a35–b2): If *φ* in '*a* is *φ*' has a contrary whereas '*b* is *φ*' has none, then *φ* is non-univocal in these applications. Thus, '…is pleasurable' has a contrary in the case of 'Desire satisfaction is pleasurable' (namely '…is painful'), whereas it has none in 'Meeting a dear old friend by chance is pleasurable'. So, '…is pleasurable' is non-univocal in these applications.

Other methods are more technical, involving specifications of intermediaries rather than contraries, or specifications of categorial relations of superordination and subordination. All of the methods have a common sort of structure, however, namely that of determining contextually whether various applications of a term march in step in larger contexts of appraisal. When they do not, that is a reason to regard the term as non-univocal.

One method presented in *Topics* i 15 is, however, is especially pertinent to our categorial argument in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6. Aristotle offers a test for homonymy which coheres narrowly with the categorial argument even to the point of employing the same illustrations:

> Consider also the kinds (*τὰ γένη*) of categories (*κατηγοριῶν*) falling under a term, whether they are the same in all cases. For if they are not the same, it is clear that what is said is homonymous. For instance, the good (or the good thing; *τὸ ἀγαθὸν*) in the case of food is what is productive of pleasure, whereas in medicine it is what is productive of health; in the case of the soul it is said of a certain quality, for instance moderate or courageous or just, and likewise in the case of a human. Sometimes <it is used in the category> of time, as when said in

[15] See § 1.5.5 for a statement of this argument; for a fuller discussion see § 7.3.

> the case of the opportune (ἐν τῷ καιρῷ);[16] for what is opportune is said to be good. Often <it is used in the category of> quantity, for instance as applied to the fitting amount (ἐπὶ τοῦ μετρίου); for the fitting amount is also said to be good. Consequently, the good is homonymous (ὥστε ὁμώνυμον τὸ ἀγαθόν) (*Top*. i 15, 107a3–12).

Here we have an argument for the non-univocity of the good which closely parallels that given in a more truncated fashion in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6.[17]

This presentation makes more explicit that the good is itself predicated of items falling in various categories, and that this is already, in Aristotle's view, a sufficient condition for homonymy. Since homonymy is sufficient for non-univocity,[18] a term's being predicated of items in different categories is sufficient for non-univocity. Taken one way, though, this argument simply devolves into the first, simple predicational interpretation already rejected. The simple predicational interpretation has the unfortunate result that it is too profligate; it yields non-univocity where none accrues. This is because it relies on the unrestricted principle that if the predicate '…is φ' is applied to items in more than one category of being '…is φ' is non-univocal in those applications. To repeat the most straightforward example, let '…is φ' be a member of a category of being'.

Taken in a more restricted way, however, the categorial argument of *Topics* i 15 is more promising. In this more restricted way, it has a lot in common with the third, criteriological approach to the predicational interpretation of the categorial argument of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6. This is the metaphysical notion of 'criterion', according to which we establish cross-categorial non-univocity by pointing out that what constitutes being-φ in one context is not the same as what constitutes being-φ in another, as when '…is hard' is constituted by difficulty in the case of a mathematical problem and by a lack of empathy in the case of a person. Applied here, the point would be that the good, that is, the good thing (τὸ ἀγαθόν), shifts from category to category; in one case it is a quality, in another an action, in another a time, and so forth. One might then suppose that since *what is good* differs in these different categories, the good is not the same throughout. From this

[16] Reading οἷον τὸ ἐν τῷ καιρῷ for οἷον τὸ ἐν τῷ καιρῷ ἀγαθόν at 107a9, accepting a proposed deletion of Maguinness (1947), also accepted by Brunschwig (1967).

[17] Smith (1997, 97) suggests that though parallel, Aristotle's aim in the *Topics* is slightly more modest: 'The discussion of the senses of "good" closely resembles a position stated in each category, and thus there cannot be a single Platonic Idea of goodness. In the present text [*Topics* i 15], Aristotle advances the more modest claim that since "good" is applicable to things in *several* categories, it must be equivocal'. In the terms employed above, Aristotle is here arguing for homonymy, but not yet the covariance thesis.

[18] Indeed, in some cases homonymy simply is non-univocity. On the relation of Aristotle's shifting uses of the word 'homonymy' (ὁμώνυμον) to one another, see Shields (1999). In the current discussion, it is noteworthy, as Smith (1997, 97–98) observes, that with the exception of 107a34, Aristotle at this point in the chapter switches without comment from speaking of a term's being meant in many ways (λέγεται πολλαχῶς) to its being homonymous (ὁμώνυμον).

one might carry on to infer that '…is good' is differently applied in these categorially diverse cases.

There is, unfortunately, a problem common to these two approaches. At any rate, there is a problem so long as this approach is understood as a species of the predicational interpretation. For now the argument becomes:

(1) If '…is φ' is predicated of disparate φ-things in distinct categories $c_1 \ldots c_n$, then what it is to be φ in these predications will vary in account (ἐν λόγῳ).
(2) If what it is to be φ varies in account (ἐν λόγῳ) across a range of predications, then '…is φ' is non-univocal across these applications.
(3) So, if '…is φ' is predicated of disparate φ-things in distinct categories $c_1 \ldots c_n$, then '…is φ' is non-univocal across these applications.
(4) It is the case that '…is good' is predicated of disparate good things in categories $c_1 \ldots c_n$.
(5) So, '…is good' is non-univocal across these applications.

Put in these terms, the flaw surfaces directly: (1) is false.

In fact, (1) shows how both the constitutive sense of the criteriological approach and the categorial approach go awry: they equally conflate the extension of '…is good' with the intension of '…is good'.[19] We can and should fully grant that the good things in the various categories (= the extension of '…is good') are different accounts. What it is to be opportune, something good in the category of time, and what it is to be virtuous, something good in the category of quality, are entirely different. That is why the account (λόγος) '…is opportune' is altogether distinct from the account of '…is virtuous'. Same again for 'opportune moment' and 'virtue'. Still, from this it does not follow that instances of '…is good' as applied to these disparate items diverge in account.

There is, moreover, no possibility of our thinking that 'opportune' and 'virtuous' are homonymous, since they fail a necessary condition of being non-univocal, namely that they be the same in homophonic or orthographic type. As Aristotle says:

> Things are said to be homonymous when they have only a common name (ὄνομα), and the account (λόγος) of being corresponding to the name is different (*Cat.* 1, 1a1–2).[20]

[19] This is the main and fair verdict, put in different terms, of Woods (1982, 67), commenting on the parallel argument of *Eudemian Ethics* i 8: 'Nothing in the argument attributed to Aristotle rules out the possibility that some single character whose presence in items in any of the categories leads to their being described as goods: to be a good will be to be a substance which is φ or a quality which is φ, etc. If so, it will be natural to identify goodness with φness, a single character possessed by all goods, even though to be *a* good will vary according to the category of item involved'.

[20] Ὁμώνυμα λέγεται ὧν ὄνομα μόνον κοινόν, ὁ δὲ κατὰ τοὔνομα λόγος τῆς οὐσίας ἕτερος (*Cat.* 1, 1a1–2).

By contrast:

> Things are said to be synonymous when both the name (ὄνομα) and the account (λόγος) of being corresponding to the name are the same (*Cat*. 1, 1a6–7).[21]

Briefly, then, Aristotle's statement of what univocity requires in *Categories* 1 remains perfectly pellucid:[22]

- Univocity (= synonymy): φ is univocal $=_{df}$ there exists a single, non-disjunctive, essence-specifying account of φ.[23]
- Multivocity (= homonymy):[24]

- Put negatively: φ is multivocal $=_{df}$ there does not exist a single essence-specifying account of φ.
- Put positively, on the assumption that φ at least admits of an account: φ is multivocal $=_{df}$ there are two or more essence-specifying accounts of φ.

The question thus becomes whether the predicate '…is good', as it turns up in different categories of being, perforce has divergent accounts across those instances. So far, at any rate, nothing requires this.

Taking that all together, it appears that the fourth attempt at a predicational interpretation of the categorial argument, together with the metaphysical version of the third, criteriological interpretation, falls short of establishing Aristotle's anti-Platonic conclusion. To be sure, we have not determined that the predicate '…is good' *must* apply univocally to items in the diverse categories of which it is predicated, which is, after all, the Platonist assumption.[25] Rather, we have argued more modestly that this assumption is not precluded by the bare fact of inter-categorial predication. Since it requires at least this negative conclusion, so far Aristotle's categorial argument falls short of its intended mark.

[21] *συνώνυμα δὲ λέγεται ὧν τό τε ὄνομα κοινὸν καὶ ὁ κατὰ τοὔνομα λόγος τῆς οὐσίας ὁ αὐτός* (*Cat*. 1, 1a6–7).

[22] This account recapitulates with abbreviations and minor deviations the analysis of homonymy offered in Shields (1999, chapter 1). I here, for purposes of continuity, speak of 'univocity' instead of synonymy and non-univocity instead of multivocity. These are, however, inconsequential linguistic variations.

[23] See also § 1.1.2 for an account of Platonic univocity, together with an explication of why disjunction is to be eschewed in an essence-specifying account.

[24] This identification leaves aside an important question, not germane to our current purposes, of whether multivocity (*λέγεται πολλαχῶς*) and homonymy (*ὁμώνυμον*) are coextensive. See Shields (1999) for an argument that they are used interchangeably in *Topics* i 15.

[25] See § 1.1.2.

4.3 Goodness across the Categories: Non-predicational Approaches

The failure of the predicational approach, which as we have said is the most natural understanding of Aristotle's own presentation, counsels that we consider an alternative approach, one which, although not immediately on the surface of Aristotle's remarks,[26] might be thought to be lurking not too far below. This is the purport of an intriguing remark of Alexander of Aphrodisias, which has also been echoed in modern times.[27] In fact, however, as we shall see, taken one way, this approach collapses into the predicational approach, but with an important twist. Taken another way, it is a more radical proposal, one which effectively denies that '…is good' is a predicate at all.

We begin, then, with the intriguing suggestion of Alexander, commenting on Aristotle's categorial argument:

> He says it is necessary to consider the genera of the predicates (*τὰ γένη τῶν κατηγοριῶν*) under which things with the same name fall, that is, the categories (*κατηγορίας*); these are the highest genera. He says it is necessary to consider the categories predicated of the things signified under the names set forth, whether the same <categories> are predicated with respect to all of the things signified under the name. For if things signified under the same <name> fall under several categories and several categories are predicated of it, it will be homonymous, as in the case of the good (*ὡς ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ*).[28]

The passage presents several difficulties, but is suggestive all the same.

One way of understanding Alexander's point involves changing the order of predication. Instead of taking '…is good' as a predicate, one can, upon analysis, determine the category of the thing said to be good—the virtue or the soul, for instance—and then proceed to determine *its* category. We see upon inspection that these fall into different categories; and we infer on that basis that the good is non-univocal. The idea would then be that we have a sort of two-stage process: we first establish the extension of the predicate '…is good' and then, as it were, hold the predicate itself in abeyance. That is, instead of saying:

[26] This observation coheres with the tenor of Ackrill's (1977, 20) assessment of the non-predicational approach of Kosman (1968).

[27] Kosman (1968, 173): 'What the language of the passage appears instead to suggest is that God and intelligence, the virtues, etc., are meant not to be subjects, but rather to be *predicates*'.

[28] *Δεῖν φησιν ἐπισκοπεῖν καὶ τὰ γένη τῶν κατηγοριῶν, ὑφ' ἃς ἐστι τὰ ὑπὸ ταὐτὸν ὄνομα, τοῦτ' ἔστι τὰς κατηγορίας· ταῦτα δέ ἐστι τὰ ἀνωτάτω γένη. δεῖν δέ φησι καὶ τὰς τῶν σημαινομένων ὑπὸ τῶν ὀνομάτων τῶν προκειμένων κατηγορουμένας κατηγορίας ἐπισκοπεῖν, εἰ κατὰ πάντων τῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ ὀνόματος σημαινομένων αἱ αὐταὶ κατηγοροῦνται· ἂν γὰρ ὑπὸ πλείους κατηγορίας ᾖ τὰ σημαινόμενα ὑπ' αὐτοῦ καὶ πλείους αὐτοῦ κατηγορῶνται, ὁμώνυμον ἔσται, ὡς ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ* (Alex. *in Top.* 105. 19–25).

- The opportune (*καιρός*) is good.
- The soul (*ψυχή*) is good.
- The abode (*δίαιτα*) is good.

We say:

- The opportune (*καιρός*) is a good time.
- The soul (*ψυχή*) is a good substance.
- An abode (*δίαιτα*) is a good place.

This, suggests Alexander, reveals the otherwise hidden multivocity of '…is good'.

One can fathom two ways this might be so. The first effectively treats '…is good' as a predicate after all, but in such a way as to disguise its actual meaning.[29] This would be a way, perhaps, of saying that the accounts of '…is good' differ in just the way predicates are meant to differ in order to establish non-univocity. For when one gives an account of '…is good' when predicated of an abode, what one in fact predicates is 'is a good place'. More fully, we provide an account of the predicates as given:

- The opportune (*καιρός*) is a good time.
- The soul (*ψυχή*) is a good substance.
- An abode (*δίαιτα*) is a good place.

So that we have, for instance:

- The opportune (*καιρός*) is a temporally-good-thing.
- The soul (*ψυχή*) is a substantially-good-thing.
- An abode (*δίαιτα*) is a placewise-good-thing.

Of course, these paraphrases are awkward, but that does not preclude their being correct.

An immediate issue, however, concerns why a neutral observer, even one who embraces the theory of categories,[30] should be constrained to accept these

[29] There seems to be some (productive) confusion on this point in Kosman (1968), who suggests both that '…is good' is not predicated, and also that it is predicated but only by a distinct predicate's being disguised (1968, 174): 'The instances that Aristotle gives, then, are not the subjects of exemplary predicative statements [that is, he is not saying "God is good".—CS], but rather the predicates of such statements. They make clear that the multivocity of "good" is exhibited not only in the fact that many sorts of things may be said to be good but more in the fact that predicates of radically different types are in fact disguised means of predicating the good in radically different senses'.

[30] Here too it behoves us to recall Santas's (1989, 146) contention that Aristotle's reliance on the correctness of the doctrine of categories might already be regarded as a tendentious assumption in this context. See § 2.3.3.

periphrastic accounts. One reason might be that there is no general predicate '…is good', so that any attempt to extract one would be doomed to fail. That response, however, is plainly question-begging in this context: we are trying to determine why there is or can be no univocal predicate '…is good' and so cannot appeal to the non-existence of such a predicate in our argument. Failing some other route, this way of developing Alexander's suggestion falls short. The theory of categories itself does not constrain us to embrace the non-univocity of goodness.

This leads, however, to a second way of understanding Alexander's suggestion. This would be the slightly more difficult, but also more promising contention that '…is good' is not a disguised predicate: in fact, it is not a predicate at all. One reason for thinking this might be is that predications of '…is good' are necessarily misleading—and indeed strictly false until paraphrased appropriately. In one way, the thought here need not be overly complicated. The idea would be that certain linguistic predicates require paraphrase in order to ascertain their truth-makers.

Two sorts of examples are apposite.

First, we say:

- The average Swede has 1.6 children.

If this is true, it is not because there is some individual named by the definite description 'the average Swede' who has not one child or two, but rather 1.6 children, but rather because the total number of children divided by the number of Swedes of child-rearing age equals 1.6. The predicate '…has 1.6 children', when applied to 'the average Swede' yields a sentence which is true in virtue of a modestly complex state of affairs which most manifestly does not feature actual fractional children or actual individual average Swedes. Similarly, our suggestion runs, when we predicate '…is good', we are saying something not expressed in the surface grammar of the sentence, but something requiring a paraphrase of the general form '*x* in category c_1 manifests φ', where φ is some category-specific feature, a feature manifested by at most one category of being. If something is good as a place, insofar as it is a place, in cannot be in the same sense good as a substance, insofar as it is a substance. For, necessarily, no place is a substance. Thus, when we look to the truth-makers of our predications, we find that we must paraphrase, and indeed paraphrase away the seeming predicate '…is good'.

As a second sort of example, we say:

- This rubber ball is red.

One permissible paraphrase, acceptable and even preferable, to a realist, about universals might be:

- This ball instantiates redness.

Redness, as intended in the paraphrase, is an abstract mind- and language-independent universal, the sort of entity which can be wholly present in multiple locations at once. Suppose, however, that we have on independent grounds come to conclude that there are no universals, and perhaps even no abstract entities at all, beyond sets. Then we will offer a very different sort of paraphrase:

- This ball is a member of the set of red things.

Here again we will find the truth-maker of our sentence, if it is true, not in the realization of some abstract, univocal property, redness, by some ball, for though there are balls there are no such properties. Consequently, we have needed to resort to a paraphrase strategy which leads away from the predicate, treating it not even as a predicate disguising another predicate, but rather as a shorthand and misleading way of saying something about a subject, namely a red ball. What we are saying of it, as our paraphrase reveals, is that it is a member of a certain set, the set of red things. Understood as expressing a universal property, the predicate '…is red' has been paraphrased away.

This, then, is a second way of understanding Alexander's somewhat cryptic remark: 'For if things signified under the same <name> fall under several categories and several categories are predicated of it, it will be homonymous, as in the case of the good (*ὡς ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ*)' (Alex. *in Top.* 105. 25). Here it appears that the good thing is the subject of a predication, where the predicate is '…is a *c*', where *c* names the category in question. If paraphrase in this direction is required, then there will be some force pushing us away from the predicate '…is good' and in the direction of some good thing or other—just as in the case of '…is red', according to the set-theoretic nominalist, which predication pushes us to the set of red things and away from some universal or other.

Here again, however, we run into a new problem of predication. This is not that the argument so construed obviously fails, but rather that it does not obviously succeed. If we take the situation with the nominalistic paraphrase of '…is red' as illustrative, then we would need in the case of '…is good' what the nominalist takes as independently given in the case of '…is red', namely a reason for thinking that there is no universal available to serve as the truth-maker of (seeming) predications of '…is good'. If the theory of categories taken by itself could generate such a reason, the categorial argument would be decisive. Unfortunately, it does not. We have then arrived, at best, at a stalemate.

To put these findings more generally we can consider the following simple argument, which is the schema of the ancillary argument we have been assaying, now in summary form:

(1) If we predicate '…is φ' of objects $o_1 \ldots o_n$ in categories $c_1 \ldots c_n$, then φ is univocal only if φ admits of a univocal account.
(2) The predicate '…is good' is predicated of objects $o_1 \ldots o_n$ in categories $c_1 \ldots c_n$.
(3) The predicate '…is good' does not admit of a univocal account in these applications.
(4) Hence, the predicate '…is good' is non-univocal in these applications.

We grant (1), and we stipulate (2), at least as a matter of linguistic practice. We have in effect, then, been trying to determine why the doctrine of categories suffices for (3). So far, we have found no compelling reason for supposing that it does.

To take stock: some strategies have accepted that we have genuine instances of predication across the categories and have tried to show how the doctrine of categories itself precludes univocal predication. Others have contended rather that Aristotle's argument does not after all rest on any sort of predication of '…is good'. Instead, good things in different categories were held to be the things predicated, such that a good thing in one category '…is a propitious moment' and a good thing in another '…is a virtue' and so forth. Still others have suggested that the seeming predication of '…is good' was not a predication of goodness at all, but rather a shorthand way of disguising some other predicate, like '…is a marvellous sort of place'. When the disguise comes off, we find not goodness predicated, but something else altogether, something revealed in the truth-maker which makes the sentence expressed true. So, the predications involve paraphrases; but again, we have been hard-pressed to see how the doctrine of categories alone forces rather than merely invites paraphrase. In our last formulation, deriving from Alexander, we have concluded that one way forward would be to force a paraphrase on independent grounds, for reasons consistent with the doctrine of categories and perhaps even recommended by it without being strictly required by it. Evidently, without such an independently forced paraphrase, the best we can say is that the categorial argument is incomplete.

We turn now to an attempt to complete the argument.

4.4 Geach's Gambit

'[T]here is no such thing as being just good or bad, there is only being a good or bad so and so.'[31] So Geach contends, and in so contending he intends to speak

[31] Geach (1956, 34). More fully: 'Even when "good" or "bad" stands by itself as a predicate, and is thus grammatically predicative, some substantive has to be understood; there is no such thing as being just good or bad, there is only being a good or bad so-and-so. (If I say that something is a good or bad

with an Aristotelian echo, holding there simply can be no univocal predication across the categories.[32] His thesis stakes a clearer and bolder claim than we have seen so far, however. He does not say that the predicate '…is good' is really several predicates; he does not say that the predicate '…is good' disguises some other predicate; he does not say that '…is good' is predicated differently according to different criteria in different contexts. Rather, he says that there is no such predicate. The predicate '…is good' always functions as an attributive adjective and never as a predicative adjective.[33]

If this is correct, then Aristotle will have accomplished the negative thesis of his ancillary categorial argument not by demonstrating that '…is good' is nonunivocal in virtue of its being multivocal. Rather, he will have been in a position to establish that it 'is clear that the good cannot be something common, universal, and one' (*κοινόν τι καθόλου καὶ ἕν*; *EN* i 6, 1096a27–28) in view of its not being anything at all.

Geach's position has the advantage of forcing a paraphrase of linguistic predications of '…is good'. He realizes, of course, that people say things like 'This young *Heldentenor* is really good' and 'I really do not care for their manicotti but their pizza is good'. When people speak this way, they are not predicating some general property *being good* of these various subjects but are rather conveying something more restricted, that 'S is a good *Heldentenor*' or that 'This restaurant makes good pizza'. That is, every seeming predicative use of '…is good' is in fact a disguised attributive use.

The distinction between predicative and attributive uses of adjectives with which Geach is working is reasonably straightforward. As a syntactic matter in English, attributive adjectives tend to occur before the noun they modify and predicative adjectives after:

- Attributive: The yellow lorry blocked the roadway.
- Predicative: Her speech was boring.

Most adjectives, by this syntactic test, can function as either. Some, however, are strictly attributive, including, for instance, 'mere', 'former', and 'main'. We can say:

- The former occupant was…

thing, either "thing" is a mere proxy for a more descriptive noun to be supplied from the context; or else I am trying to use "good" or "bad" predicatively, and its being grammatically attributive is a mere disguise. The latter attempt is, on my thesis, illegitimate.)'

[32] Geach (1956, 35, 40, 41, 42). More generally, as Pigden notes (1990, 147): 'Geach's project is Aristotelian. From a consideration of what it is to be a man, he wants to derive a notion of a good man'.

[33] Geach (1956, 33): 'I can now state my first thesis about good and evil: "good" and "bad" are always attributive, not predicative, adjectives'.

but cannot say:

- The occupant was former…

Attributive adjectives tie closely with the nouns they modify and are, so to speak, not readily detachable from them. Put linguistically, then, Geach's point is that each time we say:

- '*x* is good'

we are committed to a paraphrase of the form:

- '*x* is a is a good *φ*' or 'a good *φ* is always *ψ*'.

There is, accordingly, a metaphysical correlate: there is no absolute good, only circumscribed goods.[34]

Herein lies the philosophical significance of Geach's claim, as well as its relevance to Aristotle's ancillary categorial argument. One might have thought that 'good' functions as both an attributive and a predicative adjective. Geach disagrees; and when he does, he articulates a thesis very much like the thesis expositors of Aristotle's categorial argument offer, namely that nothing is *simply good*. Everything which is good is a good something or other.[35] Any attempt to abstract a single predicate '…is good' from these attributive uses yields a philosopher's fiction. Looked at from this perspective, Aristotle is simply calling attention to the attributive nature of the good.[36]

For our purposes, then, Geach's argument is best regarded as an argument of the following form:

(1) Goodness is never predicative and always attributive.
(2) If (1), there is no transcategorial predication of goodness.
(3) If (2), then, necessarily, goodness is predicated, if predicated at all, intra-categorially.[37]

[34] See § 1.2 for the contrast between circumscribed and absolute conceptions of goodness.

[35] Perhaps the clearest example comes from Woods (1982, 67), when explicating the categorial argument of *EE* i 8: 'Aristotle's thought was that for some things, to be good *is* to be (a case of) justice, for others to be good is to be the right amount, and similarly in the other cases'. Further, '…judgements of the form "X is a good" are most plausibly regarded as analysable into statements of the form "X is a thing which is good…"'

[36] Again, Woods is exemplary when commenting on the parallel argument of *EE* i 8 (1982, 67): 'The point will then be that to be a good consists sometimes in being a certain sort of substance, sometimes a certain sort of quality, sometimes a certain sort of quantity; it follows from this that there can be no abstractable generic feature common to all goods…'.

[37] This issue is explored in § 7.4.

(4) So, necessarily, goodness is predicated, if predicated at all, intra-categorially.
(5) If (4), then necessarily, if goodness is predicated of *x* in c_1 and of *y* in c_2 (where c_1 and c_2 are distinct categories of value), then any account (λόγος) of goodness as it is predicated of *x* will diverge from any account of goodness as it is predicated of *y*.
(6) Hence, necessarily, if goodness is predicated of *x* in c_1 and of *y* in c_2 (where c_1 and c_2 are distinct categories of value), then any account (λόγος) of goodness as it is predicated of *x* will diverge from any account of goodness as it is predicated of *y*.

The point of mentioning the possibility of intra-categorial predications, although it is out of step with Geach's greater objective, is that we are here thinking only of the role such an argument might play in Aristotle's ancillary categorial argument. Furthermore, as we shall see, there is some point in trying to retain an intra-categorial predicate '…is good' even in the absence of a transcategorial predicate '…is good'.[38]

If the conclusion (6) is correct, then any account (λόγος) of a linguistic predication of '…is good' will necessarily return a paraphrase given in terms of an attributive notion of goodness. So, we will have been given a reason why paraphrase is necessary and not merely possible. We will thus have moved beyond a stalemate and acceded to the soundness of Aristotle's ancillary categorial argument.

The important premiss, then, is (1), the claim that goodness is never predicative and always attributive, and this, of course, is Geach's distinctive contribution to the debate. What can be said on behalf of (1)? Geach offers three arguments for the conclusion that goodness is always attributive and never predicative, the second two of which are effectively mirror images of one another.[39] The first is an argument from the purported fact that 'good' functions as an *alienans* adjective; the remaining two rely on combinatorial features of the adjective which cohere rather nicely with some of Aristotle's uses of 'good' (ἀγαθός) as circumscribed.

The first argument begins with the observation that 'good' functions as an *alienans* adjective, and adds to that observation that only attributive adjectives can be *alienans*. So, 'good' must be attributive. The idea of an *alienans* adjective is that it can make the meaning of what it modifies other than what it would be unmodified: a *forged* banknote is not a banknote, a *decoy* duck is not a duck, and a sofa made of *artificial* leather is not made of leather. Here Geach's thought seems

[38] This issue is explored in §§ 7.3 and 9.4.
[39] Pigden (1990) offers a clear presentation and convincing refutation of Geach's claims. As he notes, however, despite the frailty of Geach's arguments, his claim about goodness has won wide support. See Williams (1972, 32–52), Wong (1986), Blackburn (1985), and Foot (1985).

to be that 'good' and 'bad' travel together, and that since 'bad' is *alienans*, so too must good be *alienans*, and thus both are attributive. Bad food is under one interpretation spoiled food; spoiled food is, however, not food, because spoiled food, food which is bad in this sense, cannot be eaten and so is not food at all.

The argument laid bare, then, is: (i) if 'bad' is *alienans*, then so is 'good'; (ii) 'bad' is *alienans*; so, (iii) 'good' is *alienans*; (iv) if an adjective φ is *alienans*, then φ is attributive; so, (v) 'good' is attributive.

This argument is multiply unpromising. The first premiss is merely asserted; the second premiss is false if it means 'always *alienans*' and inadequate otherwise; the fourth premiss is false if it means 'always attributive' and inadequate otherwise; and so its final conclusion is thus either false or inadequate. No one has denied, not Plato, not anyone else, that 'good' is sometimes circumscribed and so sometimes non-predicative. In order to make his case, Geach must show that 'good' is *never* predicative. Again, he says: ' "good" and "bad" are always attributive, not predicative, adjectives.'[40] This argument falls far short of any such conclusion.

The second and third arguments fare little better. We may treat them together. Here Geach's idea is that we spy the attributive character in the combinatorial behaviour of the adjective. If an adjective is predicative then one can combine and separate it freely from its neighbours and also deploy it in inferences of various sorts. This is, however, not true of 'good'. We say:

- She has an old red car. So, she has a red car.

The same again for 'old'. So, 'old' and 'red' may be used predicatively.

By contrast, we cannot say:

- He's a good thief. So, he's good.

Conversely, one can pool information when the predicative use is in view. We say:

- Her car is red and her car is old. So, she has an old red car.

By contrast, again, we cannot say:

- He is a butcher and he is good. So, he is a good butcher.

Perhaps when we call him good, we are in the context of speaking of him as a fencer. His being a good fencer does not make him a good butcher.

[40] Geach (1956, 33).

All of this linguistic data is suggestive. What argument does it commend? Geach seems to be arguing in this way: (i) the adjective 'good' cannot be pooled or detached and deployed in inference; (ii) if it cannot be pooled or detached and deployed in inference, then 'good' is attributive; (iii) if it is attributive, then 'good' is not predicative; so, (iv) 'good' is not predicative.

The conclusion is unobjectionable, unless it means 'is never predicative', in which case (iii) must be (iii*): if it is attributive, then 'good' is never predicative. In that case, however, (ii) must be (ii*): if it can never be pooled or detached and deployed in inference, then 'good' is always attributive and never predicative. Finally, (i) will not connect suitably with (ii*) unless it is understood as making the modality universal: (i*) the adjective 'good' can *never* be pooled or detached and deployed in inference.

Now again the argument looks feeble. To begin, again, no one doubts that 'good' is sometimes circumscribed and indeed sometimes attributive. So, (iii*) is false: possibly an adjective is attributive and also predicative. Indeed, this is actual and not at all uncommon. So, the argument thus developed is unsound.

It is indeed difficult to infer anything substantive from Geach's linguistic observations pertaining to pooling and detaching. To be clear, and to conclude, this issue should not be confused with the separate question of whether all goods are circumscribed goods, whether, that is, there is no absolute good or goodness simpliciter. What Geach is arguing specifically is that '…is good' is never predicative, and that consequently, whenever one sees such a linguistic predication of this form, one is constrained to paraphrase it into some manner of attributive good. If this were so, Aristotle's ancillary categorial argument would be afforded the kind of closure it needs to establish its negative conclusion. Goodness would not be 'something common, universal, and one' (*κοινόν τι καθόλου καὶ ἕν*; *EN* i 6, 1096a27–28), because this could be so only if there were a purely predicative use of '…is good'. Geach has not shown that there is not.[41]

This brings us back, then, to the place where we began: the ancillary categorial argument does not yet secure the non-univocity of goodness. From the bare fact that '…is good' is predicated of objects in diverse ontological categories of being we cannot infer directly that it is non-univocal.

[41] Thomson (2008, esp. chapter 1 and Addendum I (233–249)) offers a sympathetic expansion and defence of Geach's basic contention. Although she takes no note of Pigden (1990), whose criticisms strike me as defensible, she does consider (see esp. 237–239) the objections of Cappelen and Lepore (2005), who develop a response to Geach from considerations of context-sensitivity. Their view seems unscathed by her response. This framework for discussing Geach, however, removes us from the framework in which Aristotle develops his assault on non-univocity in a way in which Geach's own approach does not.

4.5 Goodness and Being: The Covariance Contention

We have focussed thus far on the ancillary categorial argument, in an effort to determine whether the doctrine of the categories gives us a good reason to accept the negative contention that goodness is non-univocal. We have seen reason to doubt that Aristotle offers us a compelling argument for this conclusion; we have not, however, understood this shortcoming to vindicate the Platonism under scrutiny. So far, then, we have at best a statement.

We have also noted, however, that Aristotle's ancillary categorial argument, even if sound, falls short of establishing the first premiss of his dominant argument, namely the covariance contention, that 'the good is meant in as many ways as being' (*τἀγαθον ἰσαχῶς λέγεται τῷ ὄντι*; *EN* i 6, 11026s23–24). It falls short because goodness might be non-univocal without marching exactly in step with being. This seems to be, however, Aristotle's exact contention: he says it is meant in 'as many ways' (*ἰσαχῶς*) as being.[42]

This suggests, then, that Aristotle's covariance contention draws from another source, and is introduced into the dominant categorial argument as already established. The presentation in *Eudemian Ethics* i 8 is slightly fuller here, but only slightly. It does, however, add one crucial claim:

> The good is meant in many ways, indeed in as many ways as being (*πολλαχῶς γὰρ λέγεται καὶ ἰσαχῶς τῷ ὄντι τὸ ἀγαθόν*). For being, as it has been delineated in other writings, signifies in one case what something is (*τί ἐστί*), in another a quality, in another a quantity, in another a time, and beyond these in being moved and initiating motion, and the good <is meant> in each of these modes, in substance (*ἐν οὐσίᾳ*) reason and god, in quality the just, in quantity a fitting amount, in time the opportune, and teaching and being taught where motion is concerned. Just as being (*τὸ ὄν*) is not something one concerning all of the things mentioned, so neither is the good (*τὸ ἀγαθόν*); nor is there a single science of either being or the good (*οὐδὲ ἐπιστήμη ἐστὶ μία οὔτε τοῦ ὄντος οὔτε τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ*).

The examples track those given in the parallel of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, with some noteworthy variations, though the general purport is the same.

[42] The word *ἰσαχῶς* is evidently an Aristotelian coinage; at any rate it does not appear in Greek before him. In fact, it occurs only 42 times in the entire canon, nine of them in Aristotle and the vast majority of them thereafter in commentaries on this passage. In Aristotle, it occurs in four works: *Top.* iv 4, 125a15, 163a14 viii 12; *Met.* *Δ* 1, 1013a16, *Δ* 18, 1022a19, *I* 2, 1053b25 (being is meant in as many way as unity; *λέγεται δ' ἰσαχῶς τὸ ὂν καὶ τὸ ἕν*), 1054a14; N 2, 1089a27 (not being is meant in as many ways as the categories; *μὴ ὂν ἰσαχῶς ταῖς κατηγορίαις λέγεται*); *EN* i 6, 1096a23; *EE* i 8, 1217b26. In each of these uses, the meaning seems to be 'in exactly as many as' and not 'at least as many as'.

What is added is the claim that being is not something one (ἕν τι), coupled with the claim that there is no science (ἐπιστήμη) of either being or the good. Aristotle's reservations about a science of being, then, carry over to the possibility of a science of the good. Although fraught with developmental questions about the possibility of a unified science in the absence of a genus,[43] we may say for now, as a default position, his view is that each science ranges over a single domain, unified under a single genus.[44]

Aristotle never develops the theme that there is no genus of the good,[45] but he does insist in various passages that there is a science of being only if there is a genus of being (*APo*. ii 7, 92b14, *Top*. iv 1, 121a16, b7–9; cf. *Met*. B 3, 998b22), and concludes, since in his view there is no genus of being, that there is no science of being. In denying there is a science of the good in virtue of the transcategorial predication of the good, he seems to be relying on the same sort of inference pattern: there is a science of the good only if there is a genus of the good, and since the good is not its own genus, there is no science of the good. We would expect, then, Aristotle's concerns about goodness across the categories to mirror rather closely his concerns about being across the categories.[46]

If this is correct, we are presented with a highly abstract taxonomical question: why is there no genus of the good? Aristotle's reasons, however debatable,[47] for thinking that being is non-univocal thus present us with another angle on the question of his categorial argument regarding goodness. Aristotle's argument that there is no science of being turns crucially on the question of whether there is a genus of being. He thinks there is not, but his reasons for insisting upon this are obscure and widely contested.[48] One argument emerges in *Metaphysics* B, in an aporetic passage concerning principles:

> If the universal is always more of a principle, then it is clear that the highest among the genera <will be principles>. For these are said of all things (λέγεται

[43] We explore these issues in chapter 10.

[44] We consider the domain-dependence of the sciences when considering the Diversity of the Sciences (**DS**) in chapter 5.

[45] The discussion of *APr.* i 36, 48b10–28 speaks of a genus of the good, but it seems only in the context of a non-committal illustration. He says, for instance, at 48b24–26: 'If that of which a science is the genus, and there is a science of the good, the conclusion is that the good is a genus' (εἰ δ' οὗ ἔστιν ἐπιστήμη, γένος ἐστὶ τοῦτο, τοῦ δ' ἀγαθοῦ ἔστιν ἐπιστήμη, συμπέρασμα ὅτι τἀγαθόν ἐστι γένος). He does not affirm the antecedent. A discussion in the *Topics* iv 3, 123b1–11 is more complicated. There we do seem to approach a commitment to a genus of the good, though, again, if less obviously, the claim emerges in the context of an illustration.

[46] Woods (1982) is again apposite, though the focus on 'ambiguity' tends to give the wrong emphasis: '…the correct interpretation must take proper account…of the fact that Aristotle seems to regard the ambiguity of "good" as in some way parallel to the ambiguity of "be"…'. To put his point in a less linguistic idiom: the proper account must take account of the fact that goodness and being covary in signification.

[47] Shields (1999, chapter 9) considers five distinct arguments for the homonymy of being.

[48] The best single focussed discussion of this topic is Loux (1973).

> κατὰ πάντων). There will be, consequently, as many principles of beings as there are primary genera, so that both being and one (τό τε ὂν καὶ τὸ ἓν) will be principles and substances, for these, most of all, are said of all beings. But neither one nor being can be a single genus of beings (οὐχ οἷόν τε δὲ τῶν ὄντων ἓν εἶναι γένος οὔτε τὸ ἓν οὔτε τὸ ὄν). For it is necessary that the differentiae of each genus be and that they each be one; yet it is impossible for the species of a genus to be predicated of their own differentiae or for the genus without its species to be predicated <of its own differentiae>. Hence, if either one or being is a genus, no differentia will either be or be one. Yet unless they are genera, they will not be principles, if indeed the genera are principles (*Met*. B 3, 998b17–28).

It emerges in passages of this sort that Aristotle's reasons for denying that being is a genus are at root concerns about the possibility of predicability in various abstract taxonomical contexts.

One point of note for the current investigation is that he denies that either being or good can be a genus for one such taxonomical reason: since one and being are readily predicated of the differentiae falling under them (we can say that *rationality* is and is one and that *being terrestrial* is and is one), then neither can be a genus at all. For, says Aristotle, 'it is impossible for the species of a genus to be predicated of their own differentiae or for the genus without its species to be predicated <of its own differentiae>'. The general principle, then, is this, coming in two parts: (i) no species can be predicated of its own differentia and (ii) no genus can be predicated of a differentia without its species being specified. Thus, where (i) is concerned: one cannot say, e.g. 'Rationality is a human' and where (ii) is concerned: one cannot say, e.g. 'Rationality is an animal', though one could say 'A rational human is an animal'. These sorts of predications Aristotle regards as either false or, more likely, as simply nonsensical.[49] So, if we have a principle to this effect applying to goodness as well, then we would be in a position to support the covariance contention independently.

It is, however, difficult to see any immediate or direct application of this taxonomical principle to goodness. In particular, whatever its merits in the case of being and oneness,[50] it is difficult to see why, on the assumption that goodness is a genus, '…is good' must be predicated of the differentiae falling under it. We may profitably compare the relations between goodness, being, and oneness on

[49] See *Topics* vi 6, 144b4–9: 'Similarly, one must inquire also whether the species or anything below the species is predicated of the differentia. For this is impossible, since the differentia is said of a wider range <of things> than the species. Further, if it is to be predicated <of the differentia, it will follow that> the differentia is a species, since what is predicated of it is one of the species. For if man is predicated of it, it is clear that the differentia is a man'. Cf. *Top*. vi 6, 144a36–37, 144b1–3.

[50] Shields (1999, chapter 9 § 8) raises some questions about the defensibility of this principle as applied to being and unity.

this score. A short version of the taxonomical argument regarding being and oneness is this:

(1) Necessarily, every differentia is one and is a being.
(2) If (1), then every differentia has '…is one' and '…is a being' predicated of it.
(3) If every differentia has '…is one' and '…is a being' predicated of it, then if one and being are genera, they will be predicated of their own differentiae.
(4) No genus is predicable of its own differentiae.
(5) Hence, neither being nor one is a genus.

The basic idea is that since every differentia is and is one, there is no escaping the predication of the proposed genera of their differentia.

Will this argument apply to goodness as well? It will, but only on the assumption that what is said in premiss (1) in respect of being and oneness can also be said of goodness. There is a subsequent tradition in Medieval philosophy of treating the predicate '…is good' as a transcendental term, coextensive of necessity with '…is a being', '…is one', and '…is true'.[51] To the extent that this tradition introduces '…is good (*bonum*)' as on par with being and oneness as derived from Aristotle, it tends to focus precisely on the categorial argument of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 as evidence for this conclusion. The tradition is surely justified in its appeal to Aristotle as an authority for the doctrine of the covariance of being and goodness: Aristotle simply states it (*EN* i 6, 11026s23–24).

Our current focus, however, is not on any question of authority, but on the prior question as to why Aristotle states the covariance contention at all, why, that is, he thinks that being and goodness are meant in equally many ways; ultimately, of course, we wish to consider the evaluative question as to whether he is justified in maintaining this equivalence. So far, the answer to this evaluative question cannot be favourable to Aristotle, if, that is, his answer to the first is that he is constrained to jettison (1), the claim that necessarily, every differentia is one and is a being, and then to apply that same result to goodness as well. Plausibly, anything which is is, of necessity, one, and, trivially, anything which is, again of necessity, is. Until such time as we have developed a highly technical notion of the predicate '…is good', however, nothing seems necessitated regarding the necessary coextensivity of '…is good' with '…is a being' and '…is one'. More to the point, nothing in the categorial argument, contrary to the understandable tendency of the subsequent tradition to locate that doctrine in this passage, provides any grounds for accepting it. On the contrary, the coextensivity contention is here

[51] See Wolter (1946), Kluxen (1964), MacDonald (1991), Gracia (1992), Darge (2004), and Aersten (2012). For a clear primary text, see Aquinas i I–II 94.

deployed as a principle established elsewhere; its grounding, however, is not easily ascertained from the initially plausible grounding treating being and one as genera which Aristotle offers in the *Metaphysics* and *Topics*. There we have taxonomical barriers that do not readily emerge, if they emerge at all, for the case of goodness.

We are left, then, wondering why Plato, or a neutral party, should accede to the claim that 'the good is meant in as many ways as being' (*τἀγαθον ἰσαχῶς λέγεται τῷ ὄντι*; *EN* i 6, 11026s23–24).

4.6 Concluding Considerations

These investigations into the categorial argument of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 have not been intended to refute Aristotle on behalf of Plato or the Platonist; nor have they, looked at from the other angle, sought to vindicate Plato or Platonism from the Aristotelian onslaught. They have rather attempted to come to terms with Aristotle's categorial argument, and have found it rich, complex, and demanding, if also in other ways more suggestive than dispositive. One can appreciate that Aristotle is in this passage not simply offering a self-contained argument to be explicated with ease and then assessed for its merit. His argument is evocative, beginning a discussion it does not finish; it draws on technical machinery it does not reproduce, and so invites further investigation into Aristotle's axiology and then also into his metaphysics more widely. Thus far, unfortunately, our foray into these broader areas has not managed to produce a clear or decisive reason for acceding to his conclusion. Nor has it, to be clear, refuted the argument we have investigated. One can see here, as elsewhere in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, a formidable argument whose final appraisal awaits further investigation.

Part of this investigation inevitably leads us into Aristotle's conception of science (*ἐπιστήμη*) and the requisites of explanation in the realm of the good. The next argument of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 explores the intersection of these issues.

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5
The Diversity of Sciences

Critics complain with some justice that Aristotle's argument regarding the diversity of sciences is question-begging.[1] The justice in this complaint derives from the fact that one might be inclined to agree that if there is a science of the good, there must be a single domain of good things studied by this science without also taking it as obvious that there is no such domain.[2] To insist without further argument that there simply cannot be any such a domain would indeed seem question-begging: this is, after all, the point at issue.

Still, this complaint will prove unjustified if independent reasons for denying the existence of a single domain of the good can be mustered. In this sense, unsurprisingly, Aristotle's contention concerning the lack of a science of goodness immediately parallels his brief against the science of being, a parallel to which he draws our attention in *Eudemian Ethics* i 8: 'Just as being is not something one concerning the things mentioned [viz. items across the categories], neither is the good something one; nor is there a single science of being or of the good (*ὥσπερ οὖν οὐδὲ τὸ ὂν ἕν τί ἐστι περὶ τὰ εἰρημένα, οὕτως οὐδὲ τὸ ἀγαθόν, οὐδὲ ἐπιστήμη ἐστὶ μία οὔτε τοῦ ὄντος οὔτε τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ*)' (*EE* i 8, 1217b33–35).

The thought is simple enough: since there is no single property of either being or goodness, neither is there a science (*ἐπιστήμη*) of either being or goodness. For a necessary condition of there being a single science of φ-things is that there be a single domain of φ-things all of which are φ in a univocal sense. Although there may be a science of all animals, there can be no single science of animals-and-tectonic-plates. That seems plain enough. Yet if the thought is simple, the argument behind it is anything but. Somewhat surprisingly, the argument Aristotle offers, if successful, is not only complicated, but threatens to be a bit of an overkill: it purports to show that goodness is not only non-univocal but very highly so: he argues not only for inter-categorial non-univocity but intra-categorial non-univocity as well. His doing so seems to have two consequences, neither strictly necessary for establishing the conclusion of the argument from science, namely, first, that being and goodness are not so closely parallel as Aristotle asserts, and, second, that goodness exhibits an especially fine-grained kind of non-univocity. This second result will have significant consequences for his own axiology.

[1] For example, see Grant (1885, vol. 1, 208–210).
[2] This seems to be the source of Eustratius's complaint. See § 2.3.1.

5.1 An Axiological Dimension

While his remarks about science slide by rather quickly and unremarkably in the text of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, in deploying this anti-Platonic argument Aristotle in fact draws upon a deep reservoir of commitments regarding the requisites of science (ἐπιστήμη). The text is brief and to the point:

> Further, since among things falling under a single Idea, there is also a single science (ἐπιστήμη), <it follows that if all good things corresponded to a single Idea, goodness>, there would also be some one science of all good things; but as things are, there are many sciences even of things falling under a single category. For instance, concerning the opportune <in the category of time>, in the case of war, <the science is> generalship, while in the case of sickness it is medicine; and concerning the fitting amount <in the category of quantity>, in the case of food <the science is> medicine, while in the case of exercise it is gymnastics (*EN* i 6, 1096a29–35).

In putting the point this way, Aristotle implies that the case for there being a single science of goodness is pretty well hopeless: not only is it predicated differently across the categories, but goodness shows itself to be non-univocal already within a single category of being. If that is correct, the prospects for there being a single science of goodness—and hence of there being some univocal domain of good things studied by that science—are less than encouraging.

There are, then, two pillars to Aristotle's contention here. The first is a plainly non-normative point concerning the requisites of science. The second is an equally but not so obviously non-normative point about intra-categorial predications of '…is good'. Together these pillars support a directly axiological thesis pertaining to the metaphysics of goodness: since goodness is non-univocal, there is no science of the good; as a corollary, we may conclude that there is no Form of the Good.

Because his presentation is terse, Aristotle's argument requires considerable expansion. The expansion is, however, tricky, not least because Aristotle introduces a counterfactual which he then counters; in doing so, just as some of his critics contend, he risks begging the question against his opponent. The argument is usefully first presented in a manner which tracks the text closely:

(1) Since there is a single science for every domain of φ-things corresponding to single Form φ-ness, it follows that if there were a single domain of good things corresponding to a single Form of the Good, there would be a single science of goodness.
(2) If there are different sciences pertaining to predications of 'being-φ' even within individual categories, then there is no single science of φ-ness.

(3) In fact, there are different sciences pertaining to predications of goodness even within individual categories.
(4) So, there is no science of goodness.
(5) So, there is no single domain of good things corresponding to a single Form of the Good.

Aristotle in fact does not draw (3) as an express conclusion; it is, however, the narrowest inference to be obtained from the text. Aristotle implies that if things are as the Platonist maintains, and there is a single, univocal Form of the Good, then we should expect there to be a science ranging over the domain it determines. A quick glance at scientific practice reveals no such science.

As stated, the first premiss is given as a counterfactual nested within a conditional. The conditional is simply this: if there is a single science of φ for every domain of φ-things corresponding to a single Form of φ-ness, then, on the assumption that there is a single domain of good things corresponding to a single Form of Goodness, such as the Form of the Good is reputed to be, then we should expect to find practitioners of a science of goodness plying their trade. Yet we observe no such thing. So, we have reason to doubt the existence of a univocal domain of good things.

Thus presented, Aristotle's argument, though perfectly valid, would be underwhelming at best. First, it could be regarded, as some have suggested, as question-begging. If the point is simply that no one has ever seen such a science, then proponents of the Form of the Good could reasonably demur: they think there *is* such a universal science, there to be seen for those who care to look. Here the best one could hope to find would be an unproductive stalemate. Further, bracketing the point about begging the relevant question, there is a question about the force of observation in this case—or, rather, the force of non-observation. After all, our failure to observe such a science might derive from any number of sources beyond its non-existence. We might simply be obtuse; or we might be living, so to speak, in a pre-axiological era. Looked at this way, we might as well be axiological pre-Ptolemaics insisting that if the earth were round, we should expect a planetary science studying its curvature. The fact that there were acknowledged proponents of a spherical earth, including Plato himself,[3] would hardly have dissuaded us from drawing our negative inference if we were otherwise antecedently disposed to do so. So construed, the argument predicts the existence of a science as following without delay from the existence of a domain; then, finding no such science, it denies the existence of the domain. This seems a fairly wobbly procedure at best.

Upon closer inspection, however, Aristotle's argument proves far more demanding and consequential than such critics suggest. The route from the first

[3] *Phaedo* 109a–111c. Of course, this analogy is imperfect and in its way unfair to Aristotle, since he too is a proponent of the sphericity of the earth (*De Caelo* i 12, 282a2–10, ii 14, 297a9–21, b31–298a10). See Dicks (1970, 195–199).

premiss to the fourth in fact runs not through observation, but rather through a two-premiss contention regarding the predication of '…is good' within certain categories and its relation to the requisites of science. Here Aristotle introduces a commitment about the requisites of science and then relies not on the bare fact that no one witnesses any practitioners of a science of goodness, but rather on some intra-categorial predication practices. These practices are held to be inconsistent with the requisites of science.

5.2 The Requisites of Science

Though not articulated in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, Aristotle's conception of the requisites of science is founded in a pervasive framework of explanatory adequacy he develops elsewhere, most fully in the *Posterior Analytics*. He expects genuine explanations to respect statable canons of reason, and so likewise expects the expression of scientific knowledge to obey some general norms of presentation. An Aristotelian science proceeds *via* demonstration (ἀπόδειξις), a kind of deductively valid form of reasoning in which the premises are necessary, better known than their conclusions, and universal in scope (*APo.* i 2, 71b16–25, i 3, 72b5–73a6; *Met*. A 1, 981a5–30, *Γ* 4, 1006a6–18, *Z* 15, Z 15, 1039b27–1040a7). The last point about their being universal in scope is most immediately relevant to the question of a science of goodness. There is a science of goodness only if there is a universal, univocal goodness shared by all the members of a common domain.

One might wonder whether Aristotle's strictures on science constitute an imposition of a framework alien to Plato's own thinking about knowledge and Forms. That is, one unfavourable reconstruction of the dialectic between them might run as follows. Aristotle develops an account of the requisites of science in his *Posterior Analytics*, as he is perfectly free to do, but then weaponizes his account by demanding that Plato adhere to these same requisites when reflecting on the Form of Goodness. Seeing that his own conception of science demands univocity across any unified scientific domain, Aristotle then commits Plato to this same standard, only to blame him for failing to meet it. From this perspective, a Platonist sympathizer might try to mute Aristotle's criticism by simply refusing to accede to his demands for the forms of univocity he—not Plato—supposes that science demands.

Things are not, however, nearly so simple. The interplay between Aristotle and the Academy on the question of the requisites of science is far more nuanced than this coarse defence would imply. In *Metaphysics* A 9, Aristotle refers to a class of 'arguments from the sciences', which, he says, will, if sound, generate Forms 'for all things of which there are sciences' (*Met*. A 9, 999b11–13). He places these arguments amongst those for the existence of Forms, which, he says 'we offer', where he seems to be referring to himself in common with other members of the

Academy, rather than to his own presumptively later independent views.[4] He does not reproduce the arguments to which he alludes in the *Metaphysics*, but, fortunately, we have them presented, either verbatim or in close paraphrase,[5] in a citation of a lost work of Aristotle's, *Peri Ideôn* (*On Ideas*), substantial fragments of which have been preserved in a commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* by Alexander of Aphrodisias.[6] Alexander recounts three arguments from the sciences, each of which engages an authentically Platonic commitment; although critical, the arguments do not present as impositions of an alien framework of any kind.[7] On the contrary, they seem to eventuate from within the Academy,[8] and to be woven together with Aristotle's criticisms in *Peri Ideôn* (*On Ideas*).

The first of these arguments teases out a connection between science and universality in a way immediately pertinent to the argument regarding science in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6:

[4] Much of this chapter has a doublet in *Met*. M 4, where, as printed in the texts of both Ross (1924) and Jaeger (1957), we find an important difference from the presentation of *Met*. A 9, namely that in *Met*. A 9, Aristotle consistently uses the first person plural, saying, in effect, 'We Platonists prove or say or think or intend…' (*Met*. A 9 990b9, 11, 16, 19, 23, 991b7), where the doublet of *Met*. M 4 uses the third person, saying, in effect, 'Those Platonists prove or say or think or intend…' (*Met*. M 4 1079a5, 7, 12, 14, 20, 1080a6). See Ross (1924, vol. 1, 190–191) for a brief discussion. This is significant for the current investigation insofar as we think the argument from the sciences resonates at least in part with Aristotle himself. If we think that Aristotle presents himself as sympathetic to at least some aspects of the argument, as he plainly is in the *Peri Ideôn* (see next note), then his critical appraisals are bound to be more circumspect and partial. Further, after noting that the use of the first-person pronoun is not unique to *Met*. A 9, Ross (1924, vol. i, 190–191) detects a similarity in tone with the preamble to *EN* i 6: 'It is to be noticed that the dust of the first person in the sense of "we Platonists" is not confined to this passage. It is common to [books] A and B [of the *Metaphysics*], and confirms the other indications of a close connexion between these books… The same tone may be detected in *E.N.* 1096a13'. Primavesi (2012, 467–469) presents a new and improved text, and helpfully displays the doublet passages of *Met*. A 9 and M 4 in parallel.

[5] In his commentary, Alexander represents Aristotle by saying 'in the first book of On Ideas, he says…' (*ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ Περὶ ἰδεῶν λέγει*; *Comm. in Aris. Met*. 79.4). As Fine (1993, 30) observes, 'My own view is that Alexander reliably preserves portions of the *Peri ideōn*; that the *Peri ideōn* is by Aristotle in the sense that he formulated both its arguments for the existence of forms and its criticisms of them; that its arguments for the existence of forms aim (perhaps among other things) to illuminate Plato's arguments for their existence in the middle dialogues; that although Aristotle's criticisms are often controversial, they do not misunderstand Plato'. See also (1995, 34): 'Although one cannot be certain, then, it is reasonable to believe that Alexander is generally accurate in recording portions of *Peri ideōn* 1.' Cf. Wilpert (1949), Cherniss (1962, 301 n. 199), and Annas (1974).

[6] Alexander also authored a work, *Ethical Problems*. He also develops some issues pertaining to homonymy and univocity as regards Aristotle's ethical theory in *Ethical Problems* § 8 (trans. Van Ophuiisen, 2001), though he does not address these issues as they arise in *EN* i 6 and *EE* i 8 specifically.

[7] These arguments are carefully reconstructed and intricately analysed to good effect by Fine (1993, chapter 7).

[8] See *Republic* 475e–480e, on which see Ross (1953) and Fine (1993). Penner (1987, 311–317) argues that Plato relies on this type of argument for much of his career, extending even to the latest periods. That is questionable, but Reshotko (1997) argues with some plausibility that it remains in play even in *Timaeus* 48d–52e. Cf. also *Laches* 199c–d and *Charm*. 174b–*c*. Natorp (1903, 406) captures the basic impetus well: 'Die Ideen müssen sein, weil sie den Gegenstand der wissenschaftlichen Erkenntnis bezeichnen, und die Erkenntnis doch zum Gegenstand das Sein hat'.

> If every science does its work by referring back (ἐπαναφέρουσα) to one and the same thing, and not to any of the particulars, then falling under each science there would be some other thing beyond the sensibles, something everlasting and a paradigm of the things occurring under that science. And an Idea is this sort of thing.[9]

The supposition of the argument is that science proceeds by referring explanations of many things back to some one thing.[10] If this one thing can be none of the particular things explained by the science, since then the *explanans* and *explanandum* would be one and the same, there must be something further, something beyond (παρά) the particulars. The Platonists nominate the Idea to discharge this work (ἔργον).

The argument here might be developed in several different ways, but one first statement runs as follows:[11]

1. If a science of sensible particular φ things accomplishes its explanatory task by referring all sensible particular φ things to a single *explanans*, then that single *explanans* is either numbered among the particular sensibles or is beyond (παρά) them.
2. That single *explanans* cannot be numbered among the sensible particular φ things.
3. So, the single *explanans* for a given science of sensible particular φ things, must be beyond the sensible particular φ things.
4. If it is something beyond (παρά) the sensible particulars, then it is both everlasting and a paradigm for them.

[9] εἰ πᾶσα ἐπιστήμη πρὸς ἕν τι καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ἐπαναφέρουσα ποιεῖ τὸ αὑτῆς ἔργον καὶ πρὸς οὐδὲν τῶν καθ' ἕκαστον, εἴη ἄν τι ἄλλο καθ' ἑκάστην παρὰ τὰ αἰσθητὰ ἀίδιον καὶ παράδειγμα τῶν καθ' ἑκάστην ἐπιστήμην γινομένων. τοιοῦτον δὲ ἡ ἰδέα (Alex., *In Aris. Met.* 79.5–8).

[10] This seems to be the force of ἐπαναφέρουσα (79.4; cf. *Phys*. ii 4, 196a13). More strongly, it might be taken to imply that by assigning some one thing to be the cause or explanation of many things, the Platonists, recognizing that that one thing could not be one of the things among the particulars themselves, then move to characterize the single explanation as something supersensible, namely, the Idea. The word is none too common in Aristotle's established corpus, but for this richer sense, see *EE* vii 6, 1240b3 and especially *Rhet*. i 3, 1358b29; cf. also *DC* i 2, 285a2 and *Rhet*. i 8, 1366a8, i 15, 1377a5.

[11] Compare Fine (1993, 67), for an approach with a slightly different emphasis: '(1) Every science works by referring to some one and the same thing (*hen ti kai to auto*). (2) No science works by referring to particulars (*kath' hekasta*). (3) Therefore for every science there is something other than (*allo*), besides (*para*) sensibles (*aisthēta*), which is everlasting (*aidion*) and a paradigm (*paradeigma*) of the things that come to be within that science (*tōn kath' hekastēn epistēmēn ginomenōn)*. (4) Therefore, there are forms'. The formulation given in the text differs in emphasizing in (2) the thought, familiar from *Phaedo* 79c–d, that any impulse to reduce the *explanans* to one or even all of the *explananda* is doomed to fail; it also makes explicit an implicit thesis regarding the explanatory work (ἔργον) of science. This way of proceeding then puts a great deal of emphasis on (4), the claim that if it is something beyond (παρά) the sensible particulars, then the *explanans* is both everlasting and a paradigm for them. Fairly plainly, as discussed in the text, additional argumentation would need to be adduced in support of that premiss.

5. If (4), then every science is committed to a supersensible everlasting and paradigm as its *explanans*.
6. Hence, every science is committed to a supersensible everlasting paradigm as its *explanans*.

This supersensible everlasting paradigm we may call the Idea (ἰδέα) or Form (εἶδος).

The argument raises a number of general questions about the Academically promoted conception of the role of Forms in science;[12] here we will restrict ourselves two observations regarding a putative science of goodness.

First, Aristotle agrees that this is a good argument for the existence of entities beyond the sensibles, namely common things (τὰ κοινά). He thinks, however, that an argument for common things is not yet an argument for Forms:

> These arguments do not prove their objective, which was that Ideas exist, but they do prove that something exists beyond (παρά) particulars and sensibles. But it does not follow at all that if some things are beyond particulars these are ideas; for beyond particulars there are common things (τὰ κοινά), and it is of these we say that the sciences are (Alex, *In Aris. Met.* 79, 15–19).[13]

As far as this argument is concerned, then, although Plato would not be entitled to infer the existence of the Form of the Good construed as something everlasting and paradigmatic, he would evidently, on these grounds, be licensed to posit the existence of some common thing, understood to be something beyond (παρά) particular good things.[14] The existence of common things, however, is consistent with, and may indeed reasonably be taken to require, univocity. It follows that this argument from the sciences would leave unscathed a Platonic univocity assumption regarding the Form of the Good.

Second, as structured, Aristotle's argument turns crucially on (4), the claim that if it is something beyond (παρά) the sensible particulars, then it is both everlasting and a paradigm for them. Unbuttressed, this claim is plainly incorrect, just as Aristotle alleges. After all, the claim that some *x* is beyond (παρά) some other thing *y* or other class of *y* things might well be true even if *y* is neither everlasting (ἀίδιον) nor paradigmatic (παράδειγμα) for *x* things—unless either 'beyond'

[12] See Fine (1993, chapter 5) for an in-depth discussion of his matter. See also, for a less balanced but still informed treatment, Natorp (1903, 406): 'Daß die Ideen mit der Wisssenschaft etwas zu thun haben, hat ja nun auch Aristoteles nicht völlig wegbringen können. Er weiß, daß der entscheidende Beweis der Ideenlehre eben der aus den Erfordernissen der Wissenschaft (ἐπιτήμη) war'.

[13] οἱ δὴ τοιοῦτοι λόγοι τὸ μὲν προκείμενον οὐ δεικνύουσιν, ὃ ἦν τὸ ἰδέας εἶναι, ἀλλὰ δεικνύουσι τὸ εἶναί τινα παρὰ τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα καὶ αἰσθητά. οὐ πάντως δέ, εἴ τινα ἔστιν ἃ εἰσι παρὰ τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα, ταῦτά εἰσιν ἰδέαι· ἔστι γὰρ παρὰ τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα τὰ κοινά, ὧν φαμεν καὶ τὰς ἐπιστήμας εἶναι (Alex, *In Aris. Met.* 79, 15–19).

[14] Here we may recall Plato's commitment to the common character of Forms, discussed in § 1.1.3.

(παρά) is given some technical meaning in this context or, more likely, some additional reasons had been adduced to extend the claim, bridging the gap from 'beyond' to everlasting (ἀίδιον) and paradigmatic (παράδειγμα). One can imagine such an argument, though it is not one reproduced or even referenced in Aristotle's presentation of this version of the argument from the sciences. Moreover, even on the assumption that such an argument were forthcoming, it is unclear how it could help Aristotle's local purposes in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, if, that is, his primary target is univocity. That does, however, seem to be his main focus, even in the argument from the sciences, since his immediate rejoinder to it in that context is to appeal to the extreme variability of actual scientific engagement: 'but as things are there are many sciences even of things falling under a single category' (*EN* i 6, 1096a31–32).

Taking all that together, we find that Aristotle has some distinctive commitments regarding the requisites of scientific explanation. Although it would be wrong of him to foist these upon the other Academics, he justly notes that the Platonists too have commitments in this area, and that they presuppose them in their contention that Forms must be accepted as explanatory posits.[15] Their doing so would evidently obtain as a special instance concerning the Form of the Good: if the explanation of the goodness of good things demands the postulation of an entity beyond the domain of *explananda*, then there must be an entity, the Form of the Good. Further, on the assumption that scientific explanation is possible, an assumption evidently accepted by all parties to the debate, then his is precisely the sort of inference a Platonist would accept. They would thus posit an entity capable of discharging this office. Where good things are concerned, this entity is the Form of the Good. Unfortunately, as represented in *Peri Ideôn* (*On Ideas*), the Platonists look not only to some common entity to perform this job (ἔργον) but to an everlasting paradigm, a Form, which proves an unwarranted extension prompting Aristotle to complain that they simply overreach.

It follows from these considerations that Aristotle's truncated treatment of the argument from the sciences in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 is at best only partly explicated in terms of his overt discussion of that argument in his *Peri Ideôn*. What is missing in that discussion is any developed connection between science and his demand for univocity across a domain.

5.3 A Taxonomical Cul-de-Sac

We should not assume, however, that Aristotle's representation of Plato's reliance on the argument from the sciences is misguided or otherwise unfair. Rather,

[15] On this connection, see Politis (2008).

Aristotle may simply be intending to highlight different aspects of the Platonic approach to Forms he finds objectionable. Given the context of his complaint in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, it is clear that his immediate concern is not separation or paradeigmatism, but rather non-univocity. This orientation coheres with the parallel passage in *Eudemian Ethics* i 8, where, though again brief, he offers a similar sort of argument. There we are given an express denial, coupled instructively with a similar denial about a putative science of being (τὸ ὄν). In the parallel text, Aristotle's dominant point concerns univocity and not separation, and the connection to his categorialism is still clearer. In fact, just after offering the categorial argument, he proceeds to tease out a further consequence regarding science (ἐπιστήμη):

> Just as being is not something one concerning the things mentioned [viz. items across the categories], neither is the good something one; nor is there a single science of being or of the good. Rather, not even things called good in the same schema (ὁμοιοσχημόνως).[16] belong to a single science, for instance the opportune (καιρός) or a fitting amount (μέτριον): rather, one science studies one sort of being opportune and another science another sort, and one science studies one sort of being a fitting amount and another another sort—*viz*. where nourishment is concerned, the opportune and the fitting amount <are in the purview of> medicine and gymnastics, and where military actions are concerned, <the opportune and the fitting are in the purview of> strategy, and similarly for other sorts of action. Consequently, studying the good itself could scarcely[17] belong to a single science (*EE* i 8, 1217b33–1218a1).

The reasoning is familiar, although its expression merits scrutiny.

First, and most importantly, in this passage—and only in this passage in the entire corpus[18]—Aristotle expressly denies the existence of a science of the good. To be sure, this is an implication of other passages, including our target passage in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6; our central question, however, concerns the grounds Aristotle has for denying the existence of such a science. Here in the *Eudemian*

[16] The word rendered as 'in the same schema' (ὁμοιοσχημόνως) probably means, roughly, 'in the schema of the categories as configured' or, more likely, simply 'in the same category'. That is, at any rate, what the context dictates. It is not used in that sense elsewhere in Aristotle, however, and is indeed used, as here, in an adverbial form, only this once. Outside the spurious *Problems*, it is used primarily, and then only rarely, in the *Prior Analytics* (i 5, 27b11, b34, i 14, 33a37, i 16, 36a7, i 18, 38b6) to refer to sameness in quantity in the premisses of a deduction or to sameness of the figures of deductions themselves. In any event, *EN* i 6 is explicit in this case, contending 'as things are there are many sciences even of things falling *under a single category*' (ὑπὸ μίαν κατηγορίαν; *EN* i 6, 1096a31–32).

[17] For this use of σχολῇ (scarcely), see *Met*. B 3, 999a10.

[18] The discussion of *APr* i 36, 48b10–27 is inconclusive at best; there Aristotle seems merely to be using the possibility of a putative science of the good as a vehicle for illustrating some points about predication and contraries. See also *Top*. iii 6, 119b9–30, which similarly engages the topic for purposes of illustration only, while *Top*. iv 1, 120b35–121a9 concerns rather the question of categorial restrictions on generic predication.

Ethics the grounds pertain to the putative non-univocity of the good. More exactly, good things constituting more than one kind is here regarded as sufficient for there being no single science (ἐπιστήμη μία) of goodness, although this is not an inference Aristotle draws expressly. Instead, he simply makes the observation as a sort of extension from the denial of its being something one (ἕν τι). This is, however, something we should expect if that denial is in effect a denial of univocity, for either being or goodness. If we expect a science to range over a single domain, and a single domain of science to constitute a single genus, then we can appreciate why there will be no science of goodness, just as there is no science of being. There is no single genus of either (*APo*. 92b14, *Top*. 121a16, b7–9; cf. *Met*. 998b22).

Even so, the matter is slightly complicated by the fact that Aristotle sometimes suggests that there is after all a genus of goodness. So, most directly, for instance, in *Categories* 11, in a discussion of contraries (ἐναντία), he contends:

> It is necessary that all contraries must be either in the same genus or in contrary genera, or be themselves genera. For white and black are in the same genus (for their genus is colour), and justice and injustice are in contrary genera (for of one the genus is virtue and of the other the genus is vice); but good (ἀγαθόν) and bad (κακόν) are not in one genus, but turn out to be themselves genera of certain things (*Cat*. 11, 14a19–25; cf. *Top*. 121a2, 123b10, 124b11–14, *APr.* 48b22–25; *Met*. 1018a25–35, 1055a3–33).

Here the good is introduced as a genus along with the bad, as illustrating the third disjunct Aristotle introduces for contraries: either they are in the same genus, or in contrary genera, or are themselves genera. He does not, however, expand upon why he supposes that good and bad are genera.

His doing so is surprising, if he thinks that every genus comprises entities with a single, shared essence. It is, however, an immediate consequence of his denial of univocity that there be no such essence for good things. So, unless the view articulated in *Categories* 11 uses 'genus' in a non-technical sort of way, to mean, roughly, 'kind of thing', as in 'one kind of person is impatient, another is antsy', then he has either contradicted himself or changed his view about goodness.[19]

In a way, however, we may bracket that issue, because we are at present determining the precise grounds for Aristotle's contention in *Eudemian Ethics* i 8 that there is no science of the good. Plainly he is suggesting that where there is no commonality, there is no single genus, and where there is no single genus, there is no science.

[19] Ackrill (1963, 111) is judicious: '"Good and bad are not in a genus": does Aristotle mean that they are not in any *ordinary* genus (but fall immediately under a category), or that they are not in any one category because "good" like "being" occurs in all the categories…? If the latter is Aristotle's point he does not express it very well by saying that good and bad "are themselves genera"'.

This allows him to treat goodness as immediately parallel to being: since there is no genus in either case, neither is there a science (*ἐπιστήμη*) for either being or goodness. This is why he says, in a single clause, that there is no science of either being or the good (*EE* i 8, 1217b33–35).

If the parallel is apt, one can tease out the categorial implications to which Aristotle adverts in both *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 and *Eudemian Ethic*s i 8, and which he sees as grounding his denial of a single science. The argument in the case of being, put more fully, amounts to this:

(1) Every science has principles which are necessary, invariant, and explanatorily basic.
(2) A property *φ* is necessary, invariant, and explanatorily basic only if *φ* is (i) predicated per se (*καθ' αὑτό*) of the members of its domain and is, in fact (ii) essential to them.
(3) A property *φ* is predicated per se (*καθ' αὑτό*) and essential only if *φ* is a generic property.
(4) Neither being (*τὸ ὄν*) nor goodness (*τὸ ἀγαθόν*) is a genus; so, neither being nor goodness (*τὸ ἀγαθόν*) is a generic property (for being: *APo* 87a39–b1).
(5) Hence, there is no science of being (*τὸ ὄν*) or of goodness (*τὸ ἀγαθόν*).

This, then, is the case against there being a single science of the good: exactly like being, goodness is not a genus and so is not predicated per se (*καθ' αὑτό*) of the members of any genus. There is no single domain of good things.

Why should one embrace (4), the claim that there is no genus of the good (*τὸ ἀγαθόν*)? If the parallel with being can be pushed still further, one sort of technical taxonomical argument becomes available as a possible grounding. Aristotle argues that being (*τὸ ὄν*) cannot be a genus for the technical reason that if it were, a stricture he lays down elsewhere about predication in taxonomical frameworks would be violated. This stricture can be appreciated by briefly reviewing an aporetic argument Aristotle offers about the possibility of genera of ether being (*τὸ ὄν*) or the one (*τὸ ἕν*). This argument is stated in *Metaphysics* B 3, as follows:

> But neither one nor being can be a single genus of beings (*οὐχ οἷόν τε δὲ τῶν ὄντων ἓν εἶναι γένος οὔτε τὸ ἓν οὔτε τὸ ὄν·*). For it is necessary that the *differentiae* of each genus be and that they each be one; yet it is impossible either for the species of the genus to be predicated of their own *differentiae* or for the genus to be predicated <of its own *differentiae*> in the absence of its species. Hence, if either one or being is a genus, no *differentia* will either be or be one. However, unless they are genera, they will not be principles, if indeed the genera are principles. (*Met*. B 3, 998b21–28).

Aristotle's argument here, which emerges in an aporetic context, is reasonably straightforward, though streamlining slightly for clarity:

(1) Suppose being and one are genera.
(2) Every *differentia* of a genus (a) exists and (b) is one.
(3) Hence, (a) the *differentiae* of being will (i) exist and (ii) be one; and (b) the *differentiae* of one will (i) exist and (ii) be one.
(4) If (3a.i), the genus 'being' will be predicated of its *differentiae*.
(5) If (3b.ii), the genus 'one' will be predicated of its *differentiae*.
(6) It is not possible for a genus to be predicated of its own *differentiae*.
(7) Therefore, neither (4) nor (5) is true.
(8) Hence, either (1) or (2) is false.
(9) (2) is true.
(10) Hence, our original supposition, (1), that being and one are genera, is false.
(11) Hence, neither being nor one is a genus.

The crucial claim here is (6), that it is not possible for a genus to be predicated of its own *differentia*.

Why should this be proscribed?[20] Aristotle is evidently generalizing on a thesis of *Topics* vi 6, to the effect that no genus can be predicated of the *differentiae* falling under it (*Top*. vi 6, 144a31–b3). In general, this seems correct: to say, for instance, that 'rational', the *differentia* differentiating human beings from other animals, is itself an animal, yields gibberish, namely 'rational is an animal'. Whether or not this general principle can be generalized is debatable,[21] but in the present context that may be granted. The question then would become whether the argument might be extended to goodness as well. For, as stated, the argument against the genera pertains only to being and one (*τὸ ἓν καὶ τὸ ὄν*), and not to goodness (*τὸ ἀγαθόν*).

Nor is it at all clear how it could: any claim that 'rationality is good' or 'rationality is a good' or 'the rational is good', whether true or false, is hardly nonsensical. Indeed, and on the contrary, this predication seems not only sensible but wholly defensible. It follows, then, that these sorts of technical, taxonomical arguments,

[20] Kotwick (2016, 181) reproduces the standard justification succinctly, but without critical assessment: 'The reason why the genus cannot be predicate of its *differentiae* is stated in *Topics* Z 6, 144a31–b3. He gives two reasons. First, if the genus (e.g. animal) is predicated of its *differentiae* the absurdity follows that as many animals are predicated of each species as the *differentiae* are predicated of the species. Second, and parallel to what was said abasing predicating the species of the *differentiae*, if the genus is predicated of the *differentiae*, it follows that the *differentiae*, e.g. rational, is an animal'. Shields (1999, 253–255) offers a critical assessment of these arguments, arguing that both fail, the second because it relies upon an unwarranted, hasty generalization.

[21] Shields (1999, 253–255) argues that it cannot (see previous note), but cf. Waitz (1844–1846, ii, 500) and Zingano (2010).

whatever their dispositive force in the arenas of being and unity, fall hard where goodness is concerned. Looked at in this way, the argument is not quite a dead end, but rather a sort of cul-de-sac: each time one seeks to defend the claim that '…is good' cannot be predicated of a *differentia* of a species falling under it, one is turned back around for another argument, but this will need to be an argument which does not rest upon a simple extrapolation of cases, based upon the principle that one cannot predicate the genus of the *differentia* of species falling under it. It does hold true in some cases; the question is why it should be held to be a perfectly general point. It follows that this other argument cannot be simply another argument based upon sheerly taxonomical proscriptions drawn from some sample cases; any such appeal would merely lead one back into the cul-de-sac, only to be turned around once more.

5.4 Intra-categorial Non-univocity

Fortunately, Aristotle signals a distinct sort of argument, a non-taxonomical argument already within the texts of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 and *Eudemian Ethics* i 8. This distinct argument returns us, for better or worse, to an argument based in the doctrine of categories. As presented, however, this argument, if sound, exacts a toll: it relies upon a commitment to intra-categorial non-univocity rather than the form of inter-categorial non-univocity we met in Aristotle's core categorial argument.[22]

The argument Aristotle offers is closely parallel in the *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian Ethics*:[23] in both passages, he makes the point that if there were a science of the good, we expect there to be a single domain, thus respecting his normal and defensible contention that each science ranges over a single domain, the members of which each equally exemplify a shared essence. He then points to science as it is practised, where we will observe, he contends, a variety of distinct sciences of the good as it is manifested in various ways, and, though he does not say so explicitly, one may further observe that these domains are not related to one another as subordinate to superordinate. This latter point will prove crucial for his argument, however.

To see this, let us recall his contention: even the opportune (καιρός), something good in the category of time, falls to different sciences in different manifestations,

[22] This argument is discussed in detail in chapter 4.

[23] There are, however, also some minor differences of presentation. In the presentation of *EE* i 8, Aristotle suggests that where nourishment is concerned, both medicine and gymnastics consider both the opportune and the fitting amount, whereas in military affairs, strategy considers these. In the presentation of *EN* i 6, he first divides the categories, the first being time, in which he then divides two spheres of studying the opportune (strategy in war, sickness in medicine), and the second place, in which he divides two spheres of studying the fitting amount (food in medicine, and exercise in gymnastics). While the differences in presentation do not imply any difference in doctrine, they do raise a question about how closely related the passages are in time and authorship.

as does a fitting amount (*μέτριον*), something good in the category of quantity (*EN* i 6, 1096a30–34; *EE* i 8, 1217b33–1218a1). His idea is direct. Both in war and in health we speak of the opportune, of the right moment to initiate an attack or of the right moment to initiate a treatment. Both sciences seek the opportune as something good, one the goodness of victory, the other the goodness of a patient's health; neither science is concerned with the good outside its own domain. Medicine is mute about the right moment to attack, and strategy in war knows nothing of when to undertake an appropriate treatment for the sick. Similarly, in the category of quantity, the fitting amount of exercise is given by the science of gymnastics and the fitting amount of food for a sick patient falls to medicine. To take a case favourable to Aristotle's way of thinking, it would be absurd for a general accomplished in military strategy to interfere in the treatment offered a patient by a doctor on the grounds that she knows all about the opportune. These are simply different sorts of goods, different ways of being opportune in their different sorts of domains.

As noted, however, it is tricky to state the argument in a non-question-begging way.[24] It appeals very clearly to the thought that it falls to the remit of manifestly different sciences to investigate the good in different domains. One first formulation runs like this:

(1) Every science (*ἐπιστήμη*) is set over a single, non-disjunctive domain *Δ*.
(2) Hence, if goodness were univocal, there would be a single, non-disjunctive domain *Δ* of good things.
(3) If there were a single, non-disjunctive domain *Δ* of good things, goodness would not be meant differently intra-categorially.
(4) A survey of the sciences reveals that in fact goodness is meant differently even intra-categorially.
(5) Hence, there is no single, non-disjunctive domain *Δ* of good things.
(6) Hence, goodness is not univocal.
(7) Hence, there is no science (*ἐπιστήμη*) of the good.
(8) Hence, since there is a Form of the Good only if there is a science (*ἐπιστήμη*) of the good, there is no Form of the Good.

So construed, the argument is an anti-existence argument, one intended to show that the Platonic Form of the Good cannot possibly be the highest good, the good at which we should aim in all that we do, because no such Form exists.

One first delicate point concerns the intersection of premiss (4), the contention that a survey of the sciences reveals that in fact goodness is meant differently even intra-categorially, with the final conclusion (8), that since there is a Form of the Good only if there is a (possible?) science (*ἐπιστήμη*) of the good, there is no

[24] See also § 1.5.3.

Form of the Good. Premiss (4) represents Aristotle's contention as a simple observation, such that the argument takes the form of a simple sort of *modus tollens*: the view under review implies that there is one science of the good, not many; but upon even a cursory inspection we see that many different sciences—very many, in fact—deal with many distinct goods; so, we have reason to set aside the Platonic view, along with the metaphysics of goodness it presupposes, namely, that is, the Form of the Good.

So construed, however, the argument seems at best uncompelling and at worst question-begging after all.[25] To take an unsympathetic approach first: it does not seem to be an item of immediate observation that upon surveying the sciences we see many different goods—many different kinds of goodness—investigated by many different sciences. If we see that photosynthesis is good for rose bushes and that regular exercise is good for humans, we do not thereby at the same time see different kinds of goodness. On the contrary, we see two health-inducing activities, each keyed to augmenting the flourishing of a kind of living being, namely rose bushes and humans. That is, it is at a minimum arguable that the account '…is good' in these cases might well be the same, namely *contributing to the flourishing of a living being*. To respond that this cannot be so, since one science in view is botany and the other is gymnastics, would plainly beg the question at issue, namely the question of whether different sciences indisputably investigate different kinds of goodness when focussing on different kinds of good things.

This in turn points to the intersection of (4) and what are implicitly two versions of the conclusion (8), that since there is a Form of the Good only if there is a (possible?) science (ἐπιστήμη) of the good, there is no Form of the Good. The two versions correspond to the question of whether it is to be read as a modal or factive conclusion. It is factive when read without the 'possible', but modal when read as including it. Taken factively, (8) seeks to make the existence of the Form of the Good contingent upon the actual existence of a science taking it as its primary focus. This, however, seems altogether overly demanding, as if one were to make the existence of transfinite numbers contingent on the existence of the life and discoveries of Georg Cantor. If aleph-naught exists at all, it existed before its discovery; back then, there was a possible but not actual subject called transfinite arithmetic. So too with the Form of the Good. On the other hand, if the conclusion is taken modally, it threatens to be so weak that one might easily grant the antecedent while denying the consequent, since it does seem true (although, for epistemic reasons perhaps not obviously true) that there might well be a Form of the Good in the absence of a science taking it as its univocal object. At any rate

[25] Some have found the conclusion that the argument is especially weak inescapable. Thus, Joachim (1951, 43), who finds several of Aristotle's arguments compelling, nonetheless thinks that the argument of the science 'looks superficial and pedantic'. Eustratius (*in Nic. Eth.* 46.1–4) finds it positively sophistical.

one could surely agree that there might well be a Form of the Good only if there is a possible science of the good, even in the absence of any such actual science, even while maintaining the existence of a possible object of that possible science.

Further, it is difficult to understand how the text of Aristotle's argument as we have it in either *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 or *Eudemian Ethics* i 8 could amount to a cogent argument for the impossibility of such a science, unless it were either an argument for the internal incoherence of such an object (as we do not await a science of even-odd numbers) or coherent but non-existent for other reasons. An argument of the latter sort is possible if, for instance, we are thinking of the Form of the Good as necessarily φ—necessarily separate or paradigmatic or univocal—but have good reason for thinking it has none of the characteristics of φ. Indeed, the text itself suggests that this is Aristotle's main contention; for he moves quickly from his observation about science to a contention about non-univocity.

So, in general, one should not suppose that Aristotle's argument is as coarse as these unsympathetic appraisals imply. He is, on the contrary, after a subtler and more challenging point. First, that he is not making a simple quasi-empirical appeal is clear from the fact that he goes on to reference the doctrine of categories once again, but now in a still more fine-grained manner: 'as things are there are many sciences even of things falling under a single category' (*EN* i 6, 1096a31–32). This represents a much more demanding sort of claim than the presentations of inter-categorial non-univocity of the categorial argument,[26] suggesting that upon inspection we observe a variety of goodnesses within a single category, and so see the diversity of the sciences still more clearly and forcefully than we had thus far. It also suggests, however, one way in which Aristotle's approach to the diversity of sciences might be in large measure sympathetic to the general Academic approach. This is that he himself remains sympathetic to the thought that we have good reason to posit a science, with its attendant non-sensible object, whenever we have a kind with a shared essence. The departure would begin with the thought that we have such a reason *only* when we have such kinds, so that the discovery of non-univocity, sufficient as it is for the denial of the existence of a kind with a shared essence, is also sufficient for the denial of a single science, and so of the existence of a single non-sensible object under which items in the domain of that science are arrayed.

This thus effectively returns the attention of the argument to its crucial denial of intra-categorial non-univocity for the predicate '…is good'. Our question then becomes reminiscent of our earlier questions about inter-categorial non-univocity.[27] Even so, the questions are not just the same. The question of inter-categorial non-univocity concerned whether the bare fact that one and the same predicate might be predicated across more than one category should be taken to

[26] See chapter 4 for an in-depth discussion of this argument.

[27] See § 4.2.

be sufficient for non-univocity. Now Aristotle's (perfectly consistent) contention is that inter-categorial predication is not necessary for non-univocity: we may have it, in some cases, even within a single category.

The needed argument thus has some advantages and some disadvantages when compared with the categorial argument: on the one hand, it need not attempt to show why inter-categorial predication should be thought sufficient for non-univocity, but on the other hand, it loses the resource of having the doctrine of categories as its fulcrum. The basic argument is again easy to state, but difficult to expand. It may be set out using two pairs of illustrative predications made in the same category:

(A) Given the enemy's position, an attack just before dawn is opportune (*καιρός*).
(B) When infection threatens, the moment bleeding ceases is opportune (*καιρός*) for the application of a tincture of iodine.
(C) For healthy circulation, a suitable amount (*μέτριον*) of omega-3 fatty acids is essential.
(D) Professional cyclists need to do a suitable amount (*μέτριον*) of weight training, enough to build strength but not so much as to add bulk.

Some reasonably uncontroversial observations about these pairs of sentences may be entered.

Both (A) and (B) concern predications in the category of time; each says of some moment that it is the opportune moment for some activity, in one case an attack and in the other an application of ointment. Similarly, both (C) and (D) are predications made in a single category, namely the category of quantity. Each predicate '…is a suitable amount' pertains to a suitable amount of some quantity or other, in one case a quantity of a food-stuffs and in the other a quantity of a training regimen. So far, no one should disagree.

Slightly less uncontroversial, but still admissible, is the thought that the specifications of which moments or which amounts these times and quantities might be fall to different sciences. In the case of the opportune in the category of time, says Aristotle, in one case the appropriate science is strategy and the other medicine; in the case of the suitable amount in the category of quantity, the appropriate science is in one case again medicine and in another gymnastics. One might also observe that in the examples given in the category of time, the unsuitable sciences are decidedly so: strategy tells us nothing at all about the opportune in the case of bodily health, while medicine is mute about battle tactics. The second set of illustrations, (C) and (D), are perhaps less decisive on this point, but the situation is clear enough. Gymnastics will not be privy to the chemistry of circulation and medicine without the benefits of cycling strategy cannot dictate how much weight training is suitable for an athlete active in that sport.

To hit their mark, these observations must now be taken to establish intra-categorial non-univocity. The argument may proceed as follows, referring to the phenomenon observed in illustrations (A)–(D) collectively as cases of *predicational purview*:

(1) If a single predicate '…is φ' used within a single category falls within the predicational purviews of distinct non-subaltern sciences, then '…is φ' is non-univocal in those applications.
(2) As (A)–(D) illustrate, the predicates '…is opportune' within the category of time and 'is a suitable amount' within the category of quantity fall within the predicational purviews of distinct non-subaltern sciences.
(3) Hence, the predicates '…is opportune' within the category of time and 'is a suitable amount' within the category of quantity are intra-categorially non-univocal.

The argument thus construed has the advantages of being brief and being transparently valid; it has the disadvantage of relying crucially on the notion of predicational purview.

That notion first requires that discrete sciences not be ordered by relations of sub- or superordination. This is because one science may be discrete from another science even though one uses the predicates of the other when one is subordinate to another, as evidently Aristotle thinks optics is to geometry and harmonics is to arithmetic (*APo*. i 7, 75b15, *Met*. M 3, 1078a9–30). Hence, being discrete cannot be regarded as sufficient for difference in predicational purview. Bracketing that sort of case, though, Aristotle's idea is that intra-categorial non-unicity is rooted in and revealed by difference in predicational purview.

Aristotle says nothing to justify this judgement in either the *Nicomachean Ethics* or the *Eudemian Ethics*. One might nonetheless understand his motivations in terms of the thought that a predicate '…is φ' is beholden to the science deploying it in a manner akin to a theoretical term. Although theoretical terms are differently understood by different philosophers, one common thought would be that the very meaning of a predicate '…is φ' can be regarded as constituted at least in part by the role that predicate plays in the theory introducing it. Sometimes contrasted with observational terms,[28] a theoretical term is in this sense beholden for its meaning to the theory, or in our case, the science (ἐπιστήμη), in which it occurs. Thus, in Aristotle's terms the account (λόγος) of '…is opportune' in military affairs would perforce make reference to other ineliminably military terms, whereas the account of that same predicate as it is deployed in matters of health would inalienably make reference to medical terms. This would, in keeping with

[28] Though they need not be. See Lewis (1970).

Aristotle's general account of homonymy,[29] suffice for the intra-categorial non-univocity of the predicate.

That granted, there is an important hurdle still to be crossed. Let us, that is, grant that the predicates '…is opportune' and '…is a suitable amount' are intra-categorially non-univocal for just the reason given, namely that they fall within the predicational purviews of discrete sciences insofar as they are best regarded as effectively akin to theoretical terms. One could not yet, however, grant that the predicate in the centre of our scope would inherit their non-univocity: it might yet be the case that '…is good' as it applies to the opportune in strategy and medicine receives the same account. To be clear, what we require in the present context is not that either '…is opportune' or '…is a suitable amount' is intra-categorially non-univocal, but rather that '…is good' is so in these applications:

- An opportune moment in strategy is good.
- An opportune moment in medicine is good.
- A suitable amount of gymnastics is good.
- A suitable amount of medicine is good.

Even granting non-univocity at the level of the predicates '…is an opportune time' and '…is a suitable amount', we are not yet licensed to infer that the non-univocity of '…is good' trails after them automatically. We might, for example, agree that '…is elegant' means one thing when said of a logical proof and another when said of a performance of Scarlatti's Sonata in E, without thereby concluding that '…is admirable' is non-univocal as between:

- Her utterly elegant construction of that proof is admirable.

and

- His uncommon elegance in performing Scarlatti's Sonata in E is admirable.

To establish intra-categorial non-univocity along these lines would require treating '…is good' as itself akin to a theoretical term. So far, at least, this has not been established. Nor has Aristotle established any sort of inheritance principle showing that this must be so.

Taking all that together, we find that Aristotle's argument from the sciences is richly suggestive but not therefore conclusive as an argument for its stated conclusion, namely that '…is good' is intra-categorially non-univocal. This is not to say that the argument could not yet be further developed and extended into a more conclusive case. The situation is rather that the Platonist has a just rejoinder

[29] On which see Shields (1999), chapter 4.

to Aristotle's argument from the diversity of sciences—not a simple refutation, and still less a counter proof on behalf of univocity. In sum, then, although Aristotle's argument advances the dialectic in appreciable ways, it does not yet close the door on Platonic axiology.

5.5 Fractured Goodness Fractured

Let us suppose, however, that the development of this dialectic tilts in Aristotle's favour, that an argument of the sort he envisages in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 shows forth and wins the day. Then the situation would be as follows: beyond the already established (let us also suppose) categorial argument, we would now be confronted with a still more fine-grained conclusion than we have reached thus far. The categorial argument, if sound, establishes that '… is good' is predicated non-univocally across the categories. The argument from the diversity of sciences now adds another layer of non-univocity. If correct, this will have significant consequences for other aspects of Aristotle's axiology.

First, and most importantly the argument fractures goodness in a way it has not yet been fractured. If we accept the categorial argument as sufficient for the non-univocity of '… is good', then we think that the predicate receives distinct analyses, and has different meanings, as it is deployed in different categories of being. Precisely how many is perhaps open to debate. In fact, in the categorial argument Aristotle mentions only substance, quality, quantity, relative, time, and place by name, though he does imply that the point extends to all ten categories (*EN* i 6, 1096a23–29). The natural inference to draw is that he therefore thinks that '… is good' admits of precisely ten accounts; and indeed, this too seems to be his contention in saying that 'the good is meant in as many ways as being' (τἀγαθὸν ἰσαχῶς λέγεται τῷ ὄντι; *EN* i 6, 1096a23–24).[30] There is now, however, some pressure on that identification, since, presumably being (τὸ ὄν), unlike the good (τἀγαθόν) is not intra-categorially non-univocal; at any event, Aristotle never says or even suggests that this is so, and indeed, the doctrine of his discussions of the categories uniformly suggests exactly the opposite. So, it seems that the good (τἀγαθόν), too, should be meant in precisely ten ways. Now, however, it seems that Aristotle contends that the ways are more than ten.

Second, beyond this possible inconsistency, supposing that goodness is meant in some number of ways more than being is, we find ourselves with the still more threatening version of a problem we have already mooted, namely that the commensurability of good things seems, in Aristotle's stated view, to require

[30] See, however, 100 n. 18.

univocity.[31] Perhaps Aristotle will wish to allow, or even to insist in view of the argument from the diversity of the sciences, that it makes no ready sense to suppose that an opportune moment in warfare is ever better or worse than an opportune moment in medicine or that it is pointless to ask whether a good amount of salt in cooking is better than a good amount of exercise in gymnastics. One could in principle see the point of that. At the same time, one also sees the point of those who suggest that a suitable amount of exercise is better than a suitably invasive coronary bypass. The point at present is not to adjudicate this dispute, but rather to note that by further fracturing goodness, beyond the inter-categorial and into the intra-categorial zone, Aristotle also accepts a further burden regarding the commensurability of good things.

Be that as it may, one can also simply observe, more neutrally, that Aristotle's argument from the diversity of sciences, if sound, defeats Plato's univocity assumption by fracturing goodness beyond the fissures already promulgated in the categorial argument. On the assumption that the categorial argument is sound, then one might be inclined to regard the argument from the sciences as overkill; at any rate, Plato's univocity assumption would already have been refuted, and have been so without recourse to the more fine-grained fracturing now in view had Aristotle deployed only the categorial argument. Still, one may reasonably respond that goodness is meant in as many ways as goodness is meant: if that takes us beyond the level of the categorial argument, then that is where the argument leads. If that creates other axiological problems regarding commensurability, then those problems must be faced in their own terms.[32]

5.6 Concluding Considerations

Though briefly stated, Aristotle's argument from the diversity of the sciences is richly suggestive. On the negative side, its point is simple enough: if there is one Form of the Good, then we should expect one single science (ἐπιστήμη) of goodness. Yet when surveying the sciences, we will be disappointed if that is what we expect to find; for, on the contrary, different sciences treat of goods in different domains. Generally speaking, we expect an individual science to range over a single domain, and we expect a domain to be delimited by a single genus. Altogether, then: one genus, one domain, one science. The upshot seems to be, then, that there is no Form of the Good serving as the genus of some single kind featuring all and only good things.

[31] We stated this problem briefly in § 2.2, question 5. We develop it in detail below in chapter 9, where the problem is brought into sharper relief in § 9.1 and discussed thereafter.

[32] We consider them in detail in chapter 9.

Yet that upshot presupposes that our survey carries more force than a mere failure to find the science we seek. After all, like the science Aristotle repeatedly describes in his *Metaphysics* as a 'science being sought' (*Met*. A 2, 983a21; cf. K 12, 1059b1, 1059b13, b22, b25, 1060a4, a6), the science of the good might be—so far—simply undiscovered. Such a science might in principle prove superordinate to the goods discussed in the sundry sciences we have observed. We might demand, therefore, not merely a report of what we have encountered so far, but rather a modal argument capable of showing why a general science of the good should be thought impossible. Our brief texts do not contain any such argument; still, one can see how Aristotle might seek to develop one, roughly along the lines of the sorts of arguments he deploys against the possibility of a single science of being (τὸ ὄν). These arguments, found stated most fully in the *Topics*, do provide a fair picture of how such modal arguments might run.

Unfortunately, the arguments we have developed along these lines lack the dispositive force they would need to foreclose on a science of the good altogether. For the arguments pertaining to being do not generalize at all readily to arguments concerning the good. As a result, the argument from the diversity of sciences remains, at this juncture, inconclusive. It would be wrong to suggest that the Platonist has shown that it cannot succeed; but it would be fair to conclude that it has not succeeded so far.

Even so, the argument from the diversity of sciences points to a striking result, if sound: it fractures goodness. In fact, if sound, it shows that goodness outstrips even being with respect to its degree of non-univocity. By identifying intra-categorial divisions beyond those proposed in the categorial argument for the non-univocity of goodness the argument from the diversity of sciences shows, if successful, that goodness is meant is still more ways than being. Whether this should be embraced as a welcome result is a question still to be assayed.[33]

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[33] This is the question of chapter 9.

6
Adding 'Itself'

6.1 A Simple Transformation?

'Someone might also be puzzled', says Aristotle, evidently by way of registering his own sense of puzzlement, 'as to what in the world they mean to be saying <when speaking of> "Each-thing-Itself" (*αὐτοέκαστον*)' (*EN* i 6, 1096a34–35). It is tempting to regard Aristotle's complaint here as a sort of low-level cavil,[1] as if he meant merely to suggest that the Platonists go nowhere quickly by appending an 'itself' to a nominalized predicate, thereby hoping to reify a trait and thus to turn it into an isolated entity, something existing in its own right.[2] For instance, one might suspect them of starting with the predicate '…is virtuous', nominalizing the predicate adjective 'virtuous' as 'virtue', and then elevating the now named entity into something grand-sounding, by dubbing it 'Virtue Itself'. Virtue Itself would then be accepted as a Form, a mind- and language-independent entity, capable of existing in its own right, separate, immutable, uniform, serving as a paradigm, known by *nous* but never perceived by the senses.

Same again, then, for '…is good'. A soldier on a reconnaissance mission seeking a place to set up camp says, 'This site is good', only for her Platonist comrade to observe that 'goodness' is the sort of thing in which the selected site must then have a share, however imperfectly, whereas Goodness Itself is perfectly so, by dint of its being altogether good in its own right, separate from the good things and a paradigm for each of them, known not via the senses, as a campsite is perceived by sight, but only by having the mind trained upon it. If we fail to appreciate what motivates his more nuanced attitude towards their adding 'itself', this is the route to reification we suspect Aristotle of foisting upon the Platonists: they begin with a simple predicate '…is good' and then propel it down the path of nominalization leading to the postulation of the Good. They then declare their work complete by proceeding to speak securely of the Good Itself (*αὐτο-αγαθόν*).

One might initially be encouraged to think this way by connecting Aristotle's brief remark in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 to an only slightly fuller remark at the end of *Metaphysics* Z 16, where he in turn praises and castigates the Platonists for their introduction of Forms:

[1] This seems to be the unfortunate tenor of Shields (2015, 95).

[2] Although he does not elaborate, Bonitz (1870, 124) lists passages in which '*addito pronomine αὐτός ideae Platonicae distinguuntur a rebus concretis*'. The present chapter addresses the question of that in virtue of which Forms are so distinguished.

> Yet those saying that <there are> Forms are in one way right, when saying they are separated (χωρίζοντες)—if indeed they are substances—but in another way not right, because they say the one over many (ἓν ἐπὶ πολλῶν) is a form. The reason is that they are unable to give an account of these sorts of things as imperishable substances beyond those substances which are particular and perceptible; so, they make them <the same> in kind as the perishable ones (for these are the ones we know); and they <produce> Human-Itself (αὐτο-άνθρωπον) and Horse-Itself (αὐτόἵππον), by appending to <the words for the> perceptibles the word 'itself' (αὐτό) (*Met*. Z 16, 1040b28–35; cf. A 9, 991a29, B 2, 997b8, M 5, 1079b33, M 7, 1081a8–11, M 8, 1084a18–21).[3]

This passage has its own complexities, but on one reading Aristotle here means to suggest that the Platonists began with those substances with which we are familiar, perceptible substances, and then used them as a model for thinking of the category of substance in general. They then illicitly treated their own substances on that model. That is, supposing—rightly—that substances must be separated (χωρίζοντες), in the sense of being capable of existing independently, they then generalized, and concluded that *their* substances, Forms, must be separate in that same sense. They did so simply by appending 'itself' to the names of sensible substances like 'human' or 'horse', yielding, the Platonists presumed (again, on Aristotle's account), supersensible substances, Human-Itself and Horse-Itself. These supersensible substances they understandably took to be like all other substances, separate, and so the sorts of things capable of existing independently. So, suggests Aristotle, though they are right to think of substances as separate, the Platonists are wrong to think that in the class of substances there is a full range of separate, supersensible entities, and doubly wrong to suppose that the independent existence of such substances could be vouchsafed merely by adding 'itself' to the names of perceptible substances.[4]

[3] It is difficult to find precise parallels to this passage, at least where diction is concerned, since both 'Human-Itself' (αὐτο-άνθρωπον) and 'Horse-Itself' (αὐτόἵππον) are *hapax* in Aristotle. The more general 'Each-thing-Itself' (αὐτοέκαστον) of *EN* i 6, 1096a34–35 has only two parallels, in a single passage of *Top*. viii 11, at 162a26 and a31, where we also find 'Belief-Itself' (αὐτοδόξαν) at 162a30 and 31 (used twice there, and nowhere else at all in Aristotle). The passage in *Topics* viii 11 is, however, of limited value, since it concerns a diagnosis of a failure in argument involving an unnecessarily long series of steps which serve only to occlude the ground upon which the overly long argument depends. The appeal to 'Each-thing-Itself' (αὐτοέκαστον) in that context is effectively a place-holder in an illustration of that sort of argumentative failure. Otherwise, the term shows up only in Alexander's comments on the passage of *Topics* viii 11 (*In Aris.topicorum libros octo commentaria*, 573 14–15), in Damascus's commentary on the *Parmenides* (*In Parmenidem* 284, 23), and in two scholiast jottings on Plato's *Alcibiades* 1 (95, 4). So, it seems simply to be a sort of variable, as if we were to, say, take any particular *x* and turn it into *x-itself*.

[4] As Ross (1924, vol. II, 220) has noted, Aristotle's point cannot be a rejection of supersensible substances as such, since he himself accepts the existence of God and the substantial beings moving the planetary spheres (*Met*. *Λ* 8,1073a23–b1). Rather, his complaint is that the Platonists include in the class of substances reified entities which are in fact not separate.

Carrying this train of reasoning back to the good, one might understand Aristotle's truncated remarks in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 as alleging an analogous mistake.[5] We may all say that virtue is good, that a stroll after dinner is good, that an intimate chat with an old friend is always good, that a camping site overlooking a river is good. Yet without pausing to wonder whether the predicate '…is good' is univocal across these applications, the Platonists begin to speak of 'Goodness' or even 'the Good' and then indulge their habit of appending 'itself', now to the 'Good', yielding the Good-Itself (*αὐτο-αγαθόν*), which they then take to be, like all substances, separate, which is to say something separate, existing in its own right. Adding 'itself' reifies the predicate, transmuting it, somehow, into a substantial being. In fact, though, the predicate '…is good' never named a substance, because 'good' is not a name at all, but a predicate, and, indeed, not even a univocal predicate at that. Adding 'itself' added nothing but a word to a word.

We may accordingly wonder 'what in the world they mean to be saying <when speaking of> "Each-thing Itself" (*αὐτοέκαστον*)' (*EN* i 6, 1096a34–35) in the first place. If they think they are providing a means of transforming simple predicates into free-standing Forms, the Platonists are multiply misguided.

6.2 An Intrinsicality Filter

In cases like this where we plainly have an abbreviated argument in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, or rather, perhaps, where we have no more than a gesture towards an argument, we might reasonably look to the often fuller parallel of *Eudemian Ethics* i 8 for a more informative account. Here we might hope for an expansion of Aristotle's accusation that the Platonists all too readily add 'itself' to 'good', once transformed into 'goodness', to yield 'Goodness Itself'. Unfortunately, this is one of the few instances where we find no useful expansion in the parallel passage in the *Eudemian Ethics*. Aristotle there says only: 'If justice is good, and so also is bravery, there is, then, they say, something, goodness itself. So, "itself" (*αὐτό*) is appended to the common account' (*EE* i 8, 1218a9–11).[6] So, in this instance, unusually, the *Eudemian Ethics* offers little to our exposition.[7]

That said, Aristotle's complaint about adding 'itself' (*αὐτό*) is common enough. We find 'good-itself' (*αὐτοαγαθόν*) (*Met.* B 2, 996a28); 'human-itself' (*αὐτοάνθρωπος*) (*Met.* A 9, 991a29, b19, Z 16, 1044b33, M 5, 1079b33, 7, 1081a8, 1084a14; *EN* i 4,

[5] So Gauthier and Jolif (1959, *Tome II*, 48): Plato's Form of the Good is but 'an imaginary univocal concept of the good arbitrarily hypostasized'.

[6] *εἰ γάρ ἐστι δικαιοσύνη ἀγαθόν, καὶ ἀνδρεία. ἔστι τοίνυν, φασίν, αὐτό τι ἀγαθόν. τὸ οὖν αὐτὸ πρόσκειται πρὸς τὸν λόγον τὸν κοινόν*

[7] Bonitz (1870, 124) also lists *EE* i 8, 1217b3 as an instance of adding 'itself', but that passage is hardly parallel. We will have occasion to return to *EE* i 8, 1218a9–11, however, when we examine Aristotle's understanding of the upshot of adding 'itself'.

1096a35); 'line-itself' (αὐτογραμμή) (*Met*. Z 11, 1036b14); 'knowledge-itself' (αὐτοεπιστήμη) (*Met*. θ 8, 1050b36); 'animal-itself' (αὐτοζῷον) (*Top*. v 8, 137b11); and perhaps even 'form-itself' (αὐτοεἶδος) (*Met*. M 10, 1087a6).[8] Unfortunately, few of these passages do very much to ground Aristotle's complaint with any precision.[9]

Still, we can see, as we have already seen hinted in *Metaphysics* Z 16, that Aristotle's objection to the Platonic procedure in this regard finds a broader basis than what is revealed in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6. In fact, already in *Metaphysics* Z 16 there is a good deal more intimated than has so far been acknowledged. In that passage, Aristotle is concerned with what he regards as an unduly hasty assimilation of Platonic Forms to the category of substance (*ousia*). He in effect agrees that *if* Forms are substances, they satisfy a condition of being separate. Although variously understood,[10] this criterion of substantiality is plainly categorial in character: Aristotle here contends that something is in the category of substance only if it is separate, so that being a substance is sufficient for being separate. Hence, again, *if* Forms are substances, they are separate. To that extent, and only to that extent, then, from Aristotle's perspective the Platonists are making a perfectly reasonable, categorially sensitive point.

Still, they go awry, Aristotle thinks, in two key respects: (i) by treating Forms, and the Form of the Good in particular, as if they were substances in the first place; and (ii) in supposing that by doing so they purchase something superior—that the Good Itself, so denominated, proves to be *better* than the good things which are good by participation or imitation. This is for them a wanted and even a needed result, since the Good Itself must be, along some axis or other, *prior* to the good things of which it is held to be causative (so, e.g. *Rep*. vi 517b7–c1; cf. *EN* i 4, 1095a26–28, i 6, 1095a26–28, *Met*. A 983a30–b1). A question arises, then, as to why anyone should think that something substantive, something already intimating a kind of paradeigmatism, results merely by appending 'itself'.[11]

[8] Perhaps 'form-itself' (αὐτοεἶδος), because the text here relies upon a dubious but not impossible conjecture of Bonitz.

[9] (i) The 'good-itself' (αὐτοαγαθόν) at *Met*. B 2, 996a28 pertains to the thought that there could not be such a good in the realm of the immobile, on the assumption that the good is always the aim of action and action involves change; (ii) the 'human-itself' (αὐτοάνθρωπος) is marginally more fruitful, as at *Met*. A 9, 991a29, where it is part of a complaint that given that since there may be several paradigms of the same thing we may find ourselves confronted with several Forms for the same kind K—so, e.g. not only 'human-itself' but also animal and two-footed will be Forms of humans (cf. *Met*. M 5, 1079b33, 7, 1081a8, 1084a14); (iii) the 'line-itself' (αὐτογραμμή) at *Met*. Z 11, 1036b14 is mainly ad hominem; (iv) 'knowledge-itself' (αὐτοεπιστήμη) (*Met*. θ 8, 12050b36) pertains to the priority of actuality, and is offered only en passant.

[10] One may understand the notion of separation (χωριστόν) invoked here in several different ways, usefully categorized and discussed by Fine (1984) and especially, as regards the dialectic between Plato and Aristotle (Fine, 1993). See § 1.1.6.

[11] On Platonic paradeigmatism, see § 1.1.5.

The first thought is really rather simple, one which Aristotle himself, linguistically speaking at least, evidently finds congenial: appending 'itself' to 'φ' to yield 'φ-itself' serves as a sort of *intrinsicality filter*, and this in two ways.[12]

First, if one says a healthy heart is good, then it is reasonable to ask whether it is good in its own right or rather because of its contribution to some further, more comprehensive good. If at the end of a series of such questions one arrives at what is good itself and not good for any further good it serves, then one has, it seems, arrived at what is good itself—whether that which is good itself is pleasure, or honour, or, simply, the Good itself. This first way of being an intrinsicality filter contrasts being *intrinsically* φ with being *instrumentally* φ.

Second, in answer to a question about what blueness is, one might say, truly, 'Henri Matisse's favourite colour' or, even, indicating a daub of blue on a palette, 'that colour there, next to red'. What blue is in itself, however, is neither of these things: blue in itself is a colour, but not in itself anyone's favourite colour or in itself adjacent to another colour on an artist's palette. This second way of being an intrinsicality filter contrasts *intrinsically* φ with *co-incidentally* φ.

That Aristotle finds the first way of speaking of adding 'itself' as an intrinsicality filter at least broadly congenial is apparent already in the opening normative chapters of the *Nicomachean Ethics* i 1–5, which give rise to its axiological sixth chapter. One passage is especially apposite here. Aristotle, relying on a kind of non-futility principle, argues that intentional action requires some manner of highest good, before turning to the challenging question of what this good might be:

> If, then, (i) there is some end in the sphere of our [intentional] actions which we wish for because of itself and (ii) because of which we wish for other things, and (iii) we do not choose everything because of something else—for, if we do, things will proceed in this way to infinity, so that desire will be empty and

[12] Feldman (1998) rightly observes that the notion of intrinsic goodness is variously intended and runs through eight distinct notions: (i) what is unimprovably good (which he associates with Aristotle, citing *EN* i 7); (ii) what is most finally good (again Aristotle, on the basis of *EN* i 7); (iii) what is unqualifiedly good (which he associates with Kant); (iv) what is the correct object of love (which he associates with Brentano); (v) what is good in virtue of its own intrinsic nature (which he associates with Moore); (vi) what would remain good even if existing in isolation (again Moore); (vii) what is incorruptibly good (which he associates with Chisholm), and (viii) what ought to exist [for its own sake] (again Chisholm). Of this list, Feldman (1998, 343) says: 'You can almost hear some of these philosophers hyperventilating as they gush with superlatives about intrinsic goodness: "It's a kind of goodness that's unimprovable—if a thing has it, then it's so good that there's nothing you could add to it that would make it better." "It's a kind of goodness that's incorruptible—if a thing has it, nothing can detract from its value." "It's a kind of goodness that needs no qualifications—anything that's good in this way is just plain good!" ' Feldman takes the view that this list supports the judgement that there is no single notion of intrinsic goodness; but the bare existence of this list, helpful and perceptive though it is, does not show that this is so. See also § 9.4.

> futile—then clearly this would be *the* good, that is, the best good (*EN* i 2, 1094a17–22).[13]

The express contrast here is between those goods chosen for the sake of other things and those chosen for themselves, where the best good is a good we choose *because* of itself (δι' αὑτὸ). Adding 'itself' in this case reflects our first sort of intrinsicality filter twice over, first in contrasting what is good in virtue of its relation to some other good, something which is good in itself, and then also, second, highlighting that things chosen for themselves are chosen precisely for their goodness and for no other reason.

To this degree, then, Aristotle himself embraces adding 'itself' (αὐτό) to an expression. He sees it as a way of focussing on a predicate intrinsic as opposed to extrinsic or relational in character, and in particular, in the case of the good, as a way to focus on the having of goodness non-instrumentally.

Adding 'itself' serves Aristotle's own interests in a second, related way. Aristotle frequently contrasts two ways in which we might speak of things being one: (i) cases when *a* and *b* are one extensionally but not one intensionally, in which case he speaks of *a* and *b* as co-inciding (being one 'co-incidentally', κατὰ συμβεβηκός, sometimes translated, understandably but misleadingly, as cases of 'accidental' predication), as when, for instance, Socrates and Socrates-seated co-incide, and also (ii) cases in which something is not merely extensionally equivalent with something else, when it is one 'in its own right', 'in itself', or, more cumbersomely, 'one according to itself' (καθ' αὑτό) (*APo*. i 4, 73b4–11; *Met*. *Γ* 4, 1007a31–32, *Δ* 1018b34, Z 6, 1031b22; *Phys*. i 3, 179a28–37, ii 1, 192b25).

In these sorts of cases Aristotle is often, though not always, erecting a barrier to a common sort of sophistic fallacy, one which involves conflating two notions of being one, namely being one in its own right and being one co-incidentally. To take a coarse illustration first, suggested by a passage in *Eudemian Ethics* vii 6: (i) Socrates and the seated Socrates are one and the same; (ii) when the seated Socrates rises, the seated Socrates goes out of existence; (iii) so, when the seated Socrates rises, Socrates goes out of existence. Rising is, in effect, a form of suicide. While this argument may seem daft, other versions of the same argument may seem enticing. One might equally argue: (i) Britain's most notorious spy and your uncle are one and the same; (ii) you are uncommonly fond of your uncle; so, (iii) you are uncommonly fond of Britain's most notorious spy. Or, brought

[13] The translation 'this would be *the* good, that is, the best good' (τοῦτ' ἂν εἴη τἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ ἄριστον; *EN* i 2, 1094a21–22) might also be rendered as 'this would be the good, that is, the highest good', following Cicero's preference for the *summum bonum*, which has influenced the English practice (so, e.g. *De Finibus* v 6).

around to the case of the good: (i) the good sought (say, health) is one and the same as something pleasurable (again, health); (ii) what is sought is the end (the τέλος) of action; so, (iii) the end (τέλος) of action is something pleasurable; (iv) what is pleasurable is one and the same as pleasure; so, (v) what is sought in action is pleasure.

Aristotle addresses these sorts of argument by applying an intrinsicality filter (*Top.* i 5, *Soph. El.* 24).[14] To appreciate this, we may focus on the simple version, concerning the oneness of Socrates and Socrates seated. Expanded slightly, we have: (i) Socrates and the seated Socrates are one and the same; (ii) when the seated Socrates rises, the seated Socrates goes out of existence; (iii) if *a* = *b*, then what is true of *a* is true of *b*, indeed, if *a* = *b*, then, necessarily, what is true of *a* is true and *b*; (iv) so, given (i) and (ii), if the seated Socrates (= *b*) ceases to be when rising, Socrates (= *a*) ceases when the seated Socrates rises; so, (v) Socrates goes out of existence when the seated Socrates rises. Aristotle's application of an intrinsicality filter allows him to reject (iii) as a blanket premiss: taken one way, (iii) is true, but taken another way (iii) is false. Taken as an identity statement '*a* = *b*' in (iii) is perfectly unobjectionable; taken as indicating that *a* and *b* co-incide without being identical, '*a* = *b*' is false. The claim '*a* = *b*' is simply ambiguous. Aristotle observes in effect, then, that extensional sameness is not sufficient for intensional sameness. He does so by appending a filter in a manner not terribly distant from the Platonist practice of adding 'itself' (αὐτό).

The question thus arises as to the source of Aristotle's complaint about the Platonist practice. It is not as if he thinks that appending 'itself' (αὐτό) never does useful, even necessary work in philosophy.

6.3 Intrinsicality Filtering and Platonic Paradeigmatism

Aristotle's use of 'itself' (αὐτό) as a kind of intrinsicality filter does not preclude his offering a criticism of Plato's tendency to add 'itself' (αὐτό), provided, of course, that he understands Plato to be attempting to effect something distinct, something objectionable by this manoeuvre. A fuller look at the context of Aristotle's complaint in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 shows that this is precisely his own understanding. He says:

> Someone might also be puzzled as to what in the world they mean to be saying <when speaking of> 'Each-thing Itself' (αὐτοέκαστον), since the account of human is one and the same in 'Human Itself' (αὐτο-ανθρώπῳ) and in a human, for insofar as each is human, they differ not at all. If this is so, neither will the

[14] For discussion of the so-called fallacy of accident, see Bäck (2000) and (2015).

> <Good Itself and a good thing differ> insofar as each is good. Moreover, the <Good Itself> will not be *more* good by being eternal, since <a white thing> lasting a long time will be no whiter than one lasting but a day (*EN* i 6, 1096a34–b5).

In fact, he thinks that the Platonists go awry not in their tendency to add 'itself' (αὐτό), but because they suppose that in so doing they are entitled to infer more about the good than that some things are intrinsically good and other things relationally good, or that some things are good in their own rights while other things are good only co-incidentally.

Aristotle is not, then, merely complaining that the Platonists expect to gain something from nothing by adding 'itself' (αὐτό); rather, his complaint is more nuanced, that they expect too much by adding 'itself' (αὐτό). In particular, they expect the addition of 'itself' (αὐτό) to do *explanatory* work beyond offering a simple intrinsicality filter.

One can indeed find tendencies of this sort of move sprinkled throughout Plato's dialogues. Here we may consider two relevant passages briefly, not in an effort to assess the justice of Aristotle's criticism, but rather to better understand the character of his complaint.

The first passage contains an argument for Forms in Plato's *Phaedo*. It does not argue for their paradigmatic character, but does reflect Plato's tendency to add 'itself' (αὐτό) at a crucial juncture:

> 'Then consider whether this is so. We say, don't we, that there is something equal—I do not mean a log to a log, or a stone to a stone, or anything else of that sort, but something else beyond all these, the equal itself: are we to say that there is something or nothing?'
>
> 'We most certainly are to say that there is', said Simmias, 'most emphatically!'
>
> 'And do we know what it is?'
>
> 'Indeed.'
>
> 'Where did we get our knowledge of it? Wasn't it from the things we were just mentioning: on seeing logs or stones or other equal things, wasn't it from these that we thought of that object, it being different from them? Or doesn't it seem different to you? Consider it this way: don't equal stones and logs, the very same ones, sometimes seem equal to one, but not to another?'
>
> 'Yes, indeed.'
>
> 'But now, did the equals themselves ever seem to you unequal, or equality inequality?'
>
> 'Never yet, Socrates.'
>
> 'Then those equals, and the equal itself, are not the same' (*Phaedo* 74b–9 c5).[15]

[15] Both the text and translation of it are disputed. Relevant alternatives are discussed by Murphy (1951), Mills (1957) and (1958), Gallop (1975), and White (1987).

The argument contained here is simple enough in outline, though there are textual and interpretative issues that need to be considered at a finer grain.[16] We can hold these issues in abeyance at present by noting the generic form of the argument only: (i) equal sticks and stones sometimes are equal only in a context-sensitive manner; (ii) the equals themselves are never unequal (and so, if equal at all, are equal in a context-invariant manner); therefore, (iii) the equal itself and equal things are not the same.

Adding 'itself' (*αὐτό*) yields precisely what Plato needs in order to block an identification of a Form *φ*-itself and the *φ*-things falling under it. His argument is, in effect, a simple appeal to the Indiscernibility of Identicals, blocking any attempt to reduce the context-invariant application of a predicate to the context-sensitive applications, taken either individually or corporately. As such, it establishes, if anything, not paradeigmatism or even separation but rather non-identity. Still, this is not nothing, as Plato notes: on the contrary, the *φ*-itself is not nothing but something after all—and whatever it is, it is not to be identified with perceptibles.

A second passage moves further in the direction of paradeigmatism. In a polemical passage of Plato's *Parmenides*, Socrates agrees with Parmenides that his practice is precisely to add 'itself' (*αὐτό*) to mark off Forms from sense particulars:

> [Parmenides speaking]: 'Tell me. Have you yourself distinguished, as you say, separate, certain Forms themselves (*εἴδη αὐτὰ ἅττα*), and also as separate the things that participate in them? And do you think that likeness itself (*αὐτὴ ὁμοιότης*) is something separate from the likeness we have? And one and many and all the things you've just heard from Zeno?'
>
> 'It certainly seems so to me', said Socrates.
>
> 'And what about these?' asked Parmenides: 'Is there a Form itself taken by itself (*εἶδος αὐτὸ καθ' αὑτό*) of just, and beautiful, and good, and everything of that sort?'
>
> 'Yes', he said (*Parm*. 130b1–10).

Slightly further along, the connection introduced in this passage in terms of likeness (*ὁμοιότης*) is drawn out explicitly:

> [Socrates speaking]: 'What appears most clear to me at least is this: while Forms are just as paradigms (*παραδείγματα*) set in nature, other things are similar to them and are likenesses (*ὁμοιώματα*); and this partaking of the Forms is for the others nothing other than their resembling them' (*Parm*. 132c12–d4).

Although this remark emerges in a polemical context in which the theory of Forms is being subjected to extreme scrutiny, its purport is clear. Indeed,

[16] For our purposes, though, we may understand context sensitivity in line with the view of Cappelen and Lepore (2005).

precisely *because* the passage is polemical in character, the purport of this remark especially clear: Forms are paradigms.

Aristotle concurs completely with this view, at least as a characterization of Plato's conception of Forms. As he says in *Metaphysics* A 6:

> While accepting this [*scil.* that there is no knowledge of sensibles] because of this sort of reason [*scil.* the Heraclitean reason that sensibles are always in flux], Plato supposed that this [knowledge] accrues for other things and not for sensibles; for it is impossible that the common definition could be a definition of any sensibles, given they were always changing. He pronounced these sorts of entities to be Ideas, and said that sensible things were apart from these and all called after them; for the many have the same name as the Forms by participation. He swapped around only the name 'participation' (*μέθεξις*); for the Pythagoreans say that things exist by imitation of numbers, but Plato by participation, swapping around the name. But what the participation or the imitation of the Forms could be they left to others to enquire in common (*Met*. A 6, 987b4–14).

He also, again like Plato, extends the point to paradeigmatism, entering, though, a harsh criticism as he does:

> And to say that they are paradigms (*παραδείγματα*) and that the other things share them is idle prattle and poetical metaphor (*κενολογεῖν ἐστὶ καὶ μεταφορὰς λέγειν ποιητικάς*) (*Met*. A 9, 991a20–22).

So far, then, Aristotle's characterizations of Plato's conception of Forms, and of his motivation for introducing them, cohere completely with the characterizations and motivations we find expressed in the *Phaedo* and *Parmenides*.

For our current purposes, what matters is that in both works, Socrates contends that Forms are context-invariant exemplars, distinct from the context-variant instances named after them, serving as paradigms for their eponymous instances. As paradigms they are regulative for these instances and serve as standards because of their being more than merely intrinsically what they are: they are conceived, in some relevant sense, as *superior* to their instances.

This, then, forms the basis of Aristotle's complaint in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6. Taken against the backdrop of Plato's paradeigmatism and in the fuller context of Aristotle's complaint, we find, effectively, the following argument animating Aristotle's objection:

1. For each Form φ, the Platonists append 'itself', yielding 'the φ-Itself' in order to mark off φ as paradigmatically φ.
2. Adding 'itself' to 'φ' yields something paradigmatically φ only if it (a) adds something distinctive to φ or (b) renders φ more explanatorily efficacious by rendering it eternal.

3. Not (2a): Adding 'itself' to 'φ' adds nothing distinctive to 'φ', since, on the contrary, 'the account of human is one and the same in "Human Itself" ($\alpha\dot{\upsilon}\tau o$-$\alpha\nu\theta\rho\dot{\omega}\pi\omega$) and in human, for in so far as each is human, they differ not at all'. (*EN* i 6, 1096b1–2).
4. Not (2b): Adding 'itself' to 'φ' adds nothing by rendering φ eternal, since 'the <Good Itself> will not be *more* good by being eternal, since <a white thing> lasting a long time will be no whiter than one lasting but a day' (*EN* i 6, 1096b3–5).
5. So, adding 'itself' to 'φ' does not yield anything paradigmatically φ.

This argument registers a point of agreement as well as a point of disagreement. Aristotle agrees that adding 'itself' ($\alpha\dot{\upsilon}\tau\acute{o}$) to a predicate φ helps mark off one class of φ-things from another, those intrinsically φ from those instrumentally or extrinsically φ, or, perhaps, put another way, one way of being φ, being intrinsically φ, from other ways of being φ, being instrumentally, or relationally, or extrinsically φ.

So far, Aristotle has no complaint. A point of disagreement enters when the Platonists press the point further, extending their claim by implying that anything which is φ-itself is somehow *more* φ than things that are merely φ, that being more φ privileges the φ-itself, rendering the φ-itself regulative of other, less φ-things, as their paradigm from which they derive their status as φ-things. Adding these further features by adding 'itself' ($\alpha\dot{\upsilon}\tau\acute{o}$), contends Aristotle, is a form of overreach.

Looked at this way, the crucial premiss in Aristotle's argument is (2), that adding 'itself' to 'φ' yields something paradigmatically φ only on the condition that doing so (a) adds something distinctive to being-φ, or (b) renders φ more explanatorily efficacious by rendering it eternal. Aristotle contends that neither condition is met. Let us take them in turn.

If adding 'itself' ($\alpha\dot{\upsilon}\tau\acute{o}$) proves to be a sort of intrinsicality filter, as Aristotle himself contends, then it will indeed play a role in distinguishing one kind of φ-thing from another. It will mark off precisely those φ-things which are φ in their own right from those which are φ by dint of their relation to something else. Even so, Aristotle observes, nothing follows vis-à-vis the accounts of being-φ as applied to intrinsic and non-intrinsic instances of being-φ. He begins with a case favourable to his way of seeing things, one which might not cut to the core of Plato's motivation for drawing the inference he does. He says that 'the account of human is one and the same in "Human Itself" ($\alpha\dot{\upsilon}\tau o$-$\alpha\nu\theta\rho\dot{\omega}\pi\omega$) and in human, for insofar as each is human, they differ not at all' (*EN* i 6, 1096b1–2). The suggestion is that if we consider the following two sentences, we will give exactly the same accounts of '… being-φ', that is, '… is human' in both cases:

- Socrates is human.
- Human-itself is human.

Here, to be clear, we are not saying that 'Socrates is *a* human' or, still less, that 'Human-itself is *a* human'. The suggestion is rather, and more exactly, that the two sentences are paraphrasable more neutrally as 'Socrates exhibits humanity' and 'Human-itself exhibits humanity', and that the predicate, '…expresses humanity', admits of a common account across both applications. So, we are not here worried about third-man concerns, even if, as always, such concerns lurk in the wings.

Looked at this way, Aristotle's observation comes to this: the account (λόγος) of 'humanity' in both of these applications will be one and the same. Let it be, for instance 'rational animality'. Then the account of the predicate in the case of Socrates will exactly match the account of the predicate in the case of Human-itself. So, though we might well want to speak of what it is to be a human in its own right, or in itself, it will not follow that we need to elevate the predicate to paradigmatic status in so doing. Thus, for instance, when confronted with the sophistic sentence 'The seated thing is human.', we might well want to be on our guard by noting that the human is not seated in its own right, just insofar as it is a human. This we should do lest we be invited to conclude that since seated things go out of existence when they rise, humans go out of existence when they rise. Our doing so, however, gives us no reason to suppose that the account (λόγος) of being human varies as between 'The seated one is human.' and 'Socrates is human.', or even 'Human-itself is human.' It a fortiori gives us no reason to suppose that the last predication, to the extent that we might wish to make it at all, is somehow privileged and paradigmatic for the others.

So far, then, Aristotle seems on firm around. Adding 'itself' (αὐτό) does not license us to treat instances so recognized as in any way paradigmatic. Still, if that is so far correct, it is also the case that we have so far dwelt on an illustration, Aristotle's own illustration as it happens, which is favourable to his point. This is because '…is human' is not in any way, or at least not in any obvious way, context-variant. The predicate '…is human' functions more like '…is a finger' than like '…is large', and, at one stage, at any rate, Plato was happy to refrain from supposing that adding 'itself' (αὐτό) to 'finger' would yield a Form, namely Finger-itself (*Rep*. vii 523e–524a; cf. *Parm*. 130c–e). If we revert to the example of '…is equal' in the *Phaedo*, or '…is large', which is precisely contrasted with '…is a finger' in *Republic* vii, the issue becomes more complicated.

If we think that some predicates are essentially context-sensitive across the range of all perceptible instances, as we presumably do in the case of '…is large', then when we add 'itself' (αὐτό), we arrive at a kind of idealization which has a better claim to be at least pointing in the direction of paradeigmatism. If we are inclined to say, as Plato affirms that he is inclined to say, that in the case of '…is large' we in effect render the predicate context-invariant by adding 'itself' (αὐτό), then we do register a difference in account across distinct applications of the predicate. Plato in such contexts will call the φ-itself something unalloyed or pure (εἰλικρνής; *Symp*. 211e1; *Phaedo* 66a2, 67b1, 81c1; *Rep*. v 477a7, 478d6, 479d4). The contrast in accounts (λόγοι) now becomes salient, in a way that at least

challenges Aristotle's contention that accounts of φ-things and the φ-itself in as much as they are φ 'differ not at all' (*EN* i 6, 1096b2; *οὐδὲν διοίουσιν*). For now the application of the predicate '…is φ' will in every context-sensitive application be explicated as 'is φ in context *c*' or 'is φ relative to items in domain *Δ*' or, simply, 'is φ in comparison with items *x*, *y*, or *z*'. In the context-invariant case, riders such as these will be entirely inapposite.

Now, this would not yet suffice to show that adding 'itself' (*αὐτό*) takes us as far as paradeigmatism. Even so, it shows that Aristotle's tart rejoinder in (3), that adding 'itself' to 'φ' adds nothing distinctive to 'φ', is too strong, if, at any rate, we are given only the counter that 'the account of human is one and the same in Human Itself' (*αὐτο-ανθρώπῳ*) and in human, for insofar as each is human, they differ not at all'. For Plato will have at least this much of a rejoinder open to him: not every case of adding 'itself' (*αὐτό*) functions in a manner parallel to the case of humanity. Context-variant predications will behave differently, in such a way that the idealization achieved by adding 'itself' (*αὐτό*) yields an application of the predicate in question which is purer because unalloyed (*εἰλικρνής*), as Plato says, and perhaps somehow also prior. This is presumably part of the motivation for those thinkers cited in Aristotle's report that 'some used to think that beyond these many good things there is some other good, something <good> in its own right (*τι καθ' αὑτὸ εἶναι*), which is the cause of the goodness of all these good things' (*EN* i 4, 1095a26–28).

This, then, addresses the first half of (2), the crucial premiss in Aristotle's objection. The second half, (2b), offers a distinct claim that adding 'itself' (*αὐτό*) to 'φ' yields something paradigmatically φ only if doing so renders φ more explanatorily efficacious by transmuting it into something eternal.

Aristotle's response might have taken either of two distinct tracks, that adding 'itself' (*αὐτό*) hardly causes a temporal φ to become an eternal (*ἀίδιον*) φ or that, even on the assumption that it did so, its doing so would hardly have the desired effect of also making φ somehow *more* φ. In the case of the good, then, adding 'itself' (*αὐτό*) to '…is good' would not make the good any better, or, so to speak, any *more good* than it already is. So, once again, concludes Aristotle, an account (*λόγος*) of '…is good' will differ in no way at all from an account (*λόγος*) of '…is good itself' or '…is good in its own right' merely by dint of the fact that the predication in the latter case is eternal and in the former is not.

Somewhat curiously, Aristotle takes up the second but not the first response. Perhaps, though, this is due to his implicitly intending an implied counterfactual. That is, perhaps his response should be taken to have the force of his saying, roughly, 'While adding "itself" (*αὐτό*) to φ hardly has the effect of turning a temporal predicate into an eternal predicate, no matter, because even if it did, even then the desired result would not have been attained'. This, at any rate, seems to be the purport of the suggestion that '<a white thing> lasting a long time will be no whiter than one lasting but a day' (*EN* i 6, 1096b4–5; *μηδὲ λευκότερον τὸ πολυχροόνιον τοῦ ἐφημέρου*).

Assuming this is Aristotle's main objection, the core of this complaint will be akin to his first: that adding 'itself' (*αὐτό*), even on the assumption that predicates so demarcated express eternal entities, does nothing to change the account of the predicate in question. Thus, if we agree that '*φ*-itself' expresses something eternal, the bearer of *φ*, the entity which is *φ* in its own right (and let it be a Form for dialectical purposes), will be therefore neither more nor less *φ* than a *φ*-thing that is temporally *φ*. Still, it is not clear what is meant by distinguishing what is eternally *φ* from what is temporally *φ*, if not simply that one thing is eternal and *φ* while another is circumscribed in time and *φ*. If that is his point, then, at least for the predicate he uses to illustrate his complaint, Aristotle will have a point: something which is for ever white is not thereby any whiter than what is equally white but only for a while.

Still, several concerns come swiftly to the fore.[17] First, as before, Aristotle's illustration seems tailor-made to support his objection in a tendentious manner. One might wonder whether the same force would be obtained by choosing a predicate less suited to his purposes. So, for instance, one might—a Platonist presumably would—grant Aristotle's point about whiteness but then wonder whether it generalizes to *being just* or *being venerable* or *being complete* or *being alive*. Perhaps, the Platonist will ask, pressing the account closer to home, whether the same obtains for *being good*. While the matter may reasonably be disputed, these sorts of predicates might be taken to be account-divergent as between the temporal and the eternal. In any event, the bare fact of a Form's being context-invariant was meant to vouchsafe its existence in the first instance. If such Forms really were pure and unalloyed (*εἰλικρνής*) beings, then arguably, at least, they might serve as exemplars in a way unavailable to their context-sullied copies. This would, in turn, once more move us some distance towards thinking of Forms paradigmatically.

We should certainly not agree that any illustrations in this domain are clear or indisputable. That, though, is all the response on Plato's behalf intends: it is not necessary, or not obviously necessary, that one need to defer without response to Aristotle's insistence that there is no account (*λόγος*) divergence to predicates as they apply to objects in disparate domains. Indeed, as an ad hominem matter, this seemed to be part of Aristotle's own brief in his categorial argument for the non-univocity of goodness.[18]

Further, and finally, it is worth noting that Aristotle has quietly substituted one descriptor for another in his response, replacing 'eternal' (*ἀίδιον*) with 'lasting a

[17] A different sort of criticism worth pursuing but orthogonal to the current line of enquiry owes to Santas (1989, 151): 'One problem with this criticism is that once more it treats Plato's form of the Good as if it were on a par with any other Platonic Form, and this is certainly inaccurate. On Plato's theory, the forms that participate in the Good differ from it in that they have only perfection of kind, while the sensibles that participate in the Forms have no perfection but can attain at most only excellence'.

[18] See §§ 4. 1 and 4.2.

long time' (πολυχροόνιον). If we are thinking of the eternal (ἀίδιον) as what is timeless, in the Boethian manner,[19] then these hardly come to the same. If, though, we are thinking of the eternal (ἀίδιον) as sempiternal, which is to say everlasting in time, then even then we have more invested than merely 'lasting a long time' (πολυχροόνιον). These questions have a long tail, of course, taking us well beyond the current dialectical context. There is, however, a legitimate question whether Aristotle softens Plato's position unduly in mounting his criticism.[20]

Taking that all together, Aristotle's insistence that adding 'itself' (αὐτό) hardly transmutes an ordinary predicate into a Form is surely correct, if that is understood to embrace full-blown paradeigmatism. Even so, once we allow that 'itself' (αὐτό) serves as a kind of intrinsicality filter, we find that there is more to Plato's contention than the simple thought that adding 'itself' (αὐτό) magically turns a predicate into a Form. Aristotle's rejoinder turns on the thought that we would force non-univocity only if we could show that the accounts (λόγοι) of 'φ' and 'φ-itself' must diverge merely by dint of the addition of 'itself' (αὐτό). He is right that this does not suffice. Still, his brief argument in response has not shown that Plato's insistence on the context-invariability of Forms does not move some appreciable distance in the direction of paradeigmatism.

6.4 A Rejoinder from Eustratius

This result was not lost on one of Plato's most strident and articulate defenders, namely Eustratius, the twelfth-century Metropolitan Bishop of Constantinople whom we encountered briefly in chapter 2.[21] Eustratius offers a spirited defence of Plato, using as a springboard Aristotle's contention that adding 'itself' (αὐτό) to φ gives us no reason at all to suppose that the accounts (λόγοι) of 'φ' and 'φ-itself' will differ in any way.[22] His rejoinder is rooted in a fair-minded understanding of Aristotle's anti-Platonic argument, at least as regards its presentation in the text of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6.[23] That said, he uses this presentation to offer a battery

[19] This characterization follows Kretzmann and Stump (1981), in distinguishing eternity (being atemporal) from sempiternal (being everlasting, in time).

[20] Giocarnis (1964, 194), echoing a complaint of Eustratius (for which, see the ensuing section, concludes that he does: 'In developing his argument that the distinction between the timeless and the perishable does not indicate a difference in nature, Aristotle proceeds on the assumption that the eternal and self-dependently real is related to the ephemeral as that which has a long life span is related to that which has a shorter one. This, however, is unwarranted'. So far, this seems fair enough. Giocarnis then adds, however, a less helpful rider: 'Among things which are liable to change and decay relative differences in length of life span do not indicate differences in type of being'.

[21] See § 2.3.1 for a brief introduction to Eustratius.

[22] Eustratius, *in Eth.* 49.13–24.

[23] See also Cherniss (1944, 201–203): '…in *Metaphysics* 1040B 30–1041 A 3 the word αὐτό is said to have been added to the names of the sensibles to produce designations such as αὐτοάνθρωπος because the Platonists could not explain what the imperishable substances apart from the particular sensibles were and so made them the same in kind as the perishables. The same conception of the idea recurs in the criticisms of the idea of good, where Aristotle generalizes his criticism of it by asking

of arguments intended to gainsay Aristotle's contention directly: adding 'itself' (αὐτό) to φ does, he avers, give us ample reason to suppose that the accounts (λόγοι) of 'φ' and 'φ-itself' will differ.

His arguments proceed, strikingly, by supposing that adding 'itself' (αὐτό) does already reflect a form of paradeigmatism and then demands to know how Aristotle can fail to see that paradigms and their copies cannot possibly share accounts. After all, a paradigm exists as an immaterial, simple entity, and as something archetypical:

> 'But how, O Aristotle, will the good be the same and <exist> in like manner in the immaterial and the enmattered, and in an ikon and in a paradigm, and in a simple and in a composite, and in what <is φ> according to participation and what <is φ> not by participation?' (Eustratius, *in Eth*. 49.24–27).[24]

Plainly, he contends, an account (λόγος) of what is immaterial will differ from an account of what is material, since accounts of material entities must reflect the materiality of their *definienda* if they are to be adequate. After all, essence-specifying accounts capture the natures of what they define; consequently, any account of a material entity will need to reflect the materiality of the entity defined. Same again for what exists by participation and what does not exist by participation.

In proceeding in this way, Eustratius seems to rely on Aristotle's own approach to definition, as articulated in *Metaphysics* Z 10–11, though, if this is so, he does not draw attention to his proceeding in this fashion. He does, however, follow up by indulging in a more overt ad hominem criticism,[25] to the effect that even according to Aristotle the complete accounts of an archetype and an icon which is its copy will necessarily differ. After all, as Aristotle himself contends, the accounts of '…is a man' as applied to Pericles and a statue of Pericles will differ, or, then too, as Aristotle says in *De Anima*, an eye made of stone is only homonymously an eye, where, of course, this difference will perforce be captured in the accounts of '…is an eye' applied first to the eye of Pericles and then to the eye in a statue of Pericles (*DA* ii 1, 412b20–22). So, concludes Eustratius, not only is it the case that the accounts which Aristotle says will not differ in fact do differ, their differing follows directly upon Aristotle's own conception of definition and predicational homonymy.

what the Platonists can possibly mean by the terms which they form through the addition of αὐτό to each several thing. There is one and the same formula in their αὐτοάνθρωπος and in ἄνθρωπος, namely in the formula of man, for qua man the idea of man and man do not differ. Consequently qua good there is no difference between the "idea of good" and "good"'.

[24] ἀλλὰ πῶς τὸ ἀγαθόν, ὦ Ἀριστότελες, τὸ αὐτὸ ἔσται καὶ ὡσαύτως ἐν τῷ ἀύλῳ καὶ ἐν τῷ ἐνύλῳ καὶ ἐν τῇ εἰκόνι καὶ τῷ παραδείγματι καὶ ἐν τῷ ἁπλῷ καὶ τῷ συνθέτῳ καὶ τῷ κατὰ μέθεξιν καὶ τῷ ἀμεθέκτῳ; (Eustratius, *in Eth*. 49.24–27).

[25] Eustratius, *in Eth*. 49.30: 'Since even according to you…' (ἐπεὶ καὶ κατὰ σὲ…).

In advancing these rejoinders, Eustratius affects a rather exasperated tone,[26] wondering, evidently sincerely, how Aristotle, who made his start as Plato's friend and disciple, could attack Plato's theory of Ideas so stubbornly and so sophistically.[27] He cannot understand, he intones, how Aristotle could fail to appreciate how—even on his own terms—account divergence between paradigm and copy could be anything other than manifest to anyone who is a fair-minded reader of Plato.

Yet if we step back from the dialectic of the situation, we can come to see more or less directly how Eustratius and Aristotle may be arguing orthogonally to one another. As we have understood him, Aristotle is arguing that adding 'itself' (*αὐτό*) is insufficient for establishing paradeigmatism. His grounds are that even if we allow that adding 'itself' (*αὐτό*) is appropriate as a kind of intrinsicality filter, this does not yet suffice to show that the adding 'itself' (*αὐτό*) yields anything approaching paradeigmatism. Eustratius is arguing, conversely, that once we have established paradeigmatism, we have adequate grounds for concluding that the accounts (*λόγοι*) of '*φ*' and '*φ*-itself' will differ—not least because any given *φ*-itself is simple, atemporal, and paradigmatic, and hence something whose account cannot possibly mention matter, whereas any *φ*-thing which is a material copy of *φ*-itself will perforce mention matter in its account, even, indeed, on Aristotle's own understanding of homonymy.

The difference between their approaches might be reflected in their implicit attitudes towards the force of the question with which Aristotle introduces his argument: what in the world do the Platonists mean to be saying when speaking of 'each-thing-itself (*αὐτοέκαστον*)' (*EN* i 6, 1096a35)? Aristotle's answer, however uncharitable, is that they mean that adding 'itself' (*αὐτό*) licenses paradeigmatism, whereas, in fact, it warrants intrinsicality and no more. They make this leap, surmises Aristotle, because they somehow suppose that adding 'itself' (*αὐτό*) yields difference in account between *φ* as applied to *φ*-things and to the *φ*-itself.

By contrast, Eustratius answers that in so speaking the Platonists are intending to highlight that Forms are paradigms and archetypes, from which they infer difference in account between applications of *φ* to *φ*-things and the *φ*-itself. After all, he concludes, given paradeigmatism, difference in account follows directly.

Interestingly, then, we see a point of contact between Aristotle and Eustratius. Both agree that difference in account (*λόγος*) as between applications of *φ* to *φ*-things and the *φ*-itself is necessary for paradeigmatism. They can further agree, if they care to do so, that if independent grounds for the paradeigmatism of Forms can be mustered, adding 'itself' (*αὐτό*) will mark a consequential difference.

We do not need to adjudicate this dispute any further at this juncture, beyond observing that Plato would have offered an unacceptably hasty argument were

[26] See esp. *in Eth.* 49.25, 50.30, and 53.25.

[27] See esp. *in Eth.* 53.

his thought really that merely adding 'itself' (*αὐτό*) takes one all the way to paradeigmatism. About that, Aristotle is surely on firm ground. Yet if, as Eustratius presupposes, we have independent grounds for accepting paradeigmatism, then adding 'itself' (*αὐτό*) serves merely to mark a distinction introduced and defended by Plato elsewhere.

This distinction is surely one which would be pertinent to the Form of the Good. In the eventuality that Eustratius's presupposition can be independently maintained, then, adding 'itself' (*αὐτό*) will mark an important distinction between the Good-itself and good things. Merely adding 'itself' (*αὐτό*) does not, of course, *prove* that the Good-itself exists as a regulative paradigm for good things, in virtue of which they may be called good; but if paradeigmatism holds true of the Good-itself as it does for other Forms, then the answer to the question of what in the world the Platonists mean by adding 'itself' (*αὐτό*) is simple: the Form of the Good is a context-invariant paradigm in virtue of which good things are good. Good things are good by participation in the Form of the Good, and only to the degree that they do so participate. The Form of the Good is not good by participation, but, just as the addition of 'itself' (*αὐτό*) indicates, the good-itself (the *αὐτο-αγαθόν*) is good in virtue of itself, in its own right, and for no other reason.

6.5 Concluding Considerations

Aristotle's question about adding 'itself' (*αὐτό*) in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 is a fair one: whatever *do* the Platonists hope to accomplish by appending a reflexive pronoun to nominalized predicates each time they begin to talk of Forms? Still, if it is fair, the question is not merely rhetorical: it does not answer itself in its asking. Insofar as Aristotle's question prefigures a critical argument, it encodes a legitimate demand on Aristotle's part that the Platonists explain and defend their practice.

To the extent that they may do so, it will turn out that adding 'itself' (*αὐτό*) is after all consequential—not because it proves the existence of Forms or reveals Forms to be normatively regulative paradigms, but rather because it shows that in some instances, at least, adding 'itself' (*αὐτό*) amounts to more than merely adding, as in the Aristotelian practice, an intrinsicality filter. When this filter is added to achieve context-invariance, as it is in the case of the predicate '…is good', then already some steps, some small steps to be sure, have been taken in the direction of paradeigmatism.

The more substantive question of whether this in the end proves to be 'idle prattle and poetical metaphor' (*κενολογεῖν ἐστὶ καὶ μεταφορὰς λέγειν ποιητικάς*; *Met*. A 9, 991a20–22) is not to be solved by deciding whether to append or

withhold 'itself' (αὐτό) to a context-sensitive predicate. The question of whether the good-itself is the intrinsic good which Aristotle recognizes or the Form of the Good which Plato promulgates will ultimately turn on the prior question of whether context-invariance suffices for paradeigmatism. This question, though, requires a still deeper dive into Academic axiology.

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7
Intrinsic Goods Alone: A Platonic Rejoinder

7.1 Goodness Is Meant in Two Ways

The dialectic of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 takes a surprising turn when Aristotle offers his Platonist opponent a non-trivial riposte. At any rate, the turn is surprising if we had been expecting Aristotle to carry forward what has seemed an unsparing, unremitting assault on Platonic axiology—and, so far, at least, this is what the chapter has offered. Aristotle has piled argument upon argument against the view that goodness is univocal, each ending with the same conclusion: goodness is non-univocal. The Platonic view should, then, by this juncture in the chapter be deemed a non-starter.

Yet at this juncture Aristotle offers the Platonist a response to his brief against adding 'itself' (*αὐτό*) to goodness, one that is in one way conciliatory and in another way not at all so. Aristotle now imagines the Platonist allowing that some things are good in their own right (*καθ' αὑτά*) and other things merely conducive to such goods. Things conducive to those good in their own right produce or preserve intrinsic goods, or simply remove impediments to their expression (*τὰ δὲ ποιητικὰ τούτων ἢ φυλακτικά πως ἢ τῶν ἐναντίων κωλυτικά*; *EN* i 6, 1196b11–12). There are, the Platonists are now permitted to aver, both intrinsic and extrinsic goods, and, crucially, the Good itself is held to range univocally over all and only intrinsic goods. In effect, then, Aristotle has the Platonists concede that '…is good' is meant in two ways (*διττῶς*; *EN* i 6, 1096b13), and not merely one: intrinsically and non-intrinsically, which is to say extrinsically or more generally relationally.[1] Intrinsic goods are those which are 'such as to be pursued and loved for themselves or in their own right' (*τὰ καθ' αὑτὰ διωκόμενα καὶ ἀγαπώμενα*; *EN* i 6, 1096b10–11).[2]

[1] In the theory of value, 'relational' is often used as the contrary of 'intrinsic' and this does not usually cause difficulty. Still, as Humberstone (1996) notes, some relational properties seem intrinsic to a subject (someone's being more prudent than honourable or someone's having one foot bigger than her other). See, though, Francescotti (1999 and 2014) for a promising attempt to treat intrinsicality as non-relationality. For our purposes, we need only note that however this matter is to be determined, there remains a variety of notions of intrinsic value in the literature (on which see § 6.2).

[2] The question of whether this formulation represents the Platonic position accurately is a fair one. It would be inaccurate if it were to say that what is good in its own right is so *because* it is pursued or loved in its own right; though consistent with such a claim the formulation does not express the view

As a consequence of Aristotle's new posture, the dialectical situation becomes noticeably delicate. One question comes immediately to the fore concerning the force of the envisaged Platonic concession. Looked at one way, it might be thought a complete capitulation; after all, once the '…is good' is meant in two ways (διττῶς; *EN* i 6, 1096b13), it is no longer meant in one way, a contrast Aristotle is himself elsewhere keen to highlight (*EE* vii 1, 1234b19; *Phys.* i 2, 185b31; *Top.* i 15, v 2, 106a9, 130a27). If it is no longer meant in one way, then plainly goodness is no longer being treated as univocal, which has so far seemed a central plank in the Platonic position. Looked at another way, however, the concession is rather weaker, simply acknowledging something the Platonists, as we have seen,[3] are already perfectly prepared to permit, namely that some goods are intrinsic and others not: that is, after all, why they add 'itself' (αὐτό). Indeed, if we accept Eustratius as their spokesperson for the nonce, this simply *is* the Platonic position: only *one* thing is the good in itself, taken by itself, in its own right, namely the Form of the Good. Everything else qualifying as good is good only because—and only to the degree that—it stands in some manner of mimetic relation to the Good Itself.

Now, this cannot be quite what Aristotle portrays them as conceding in the current stretch of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, since he depicts them as allowing that intrinsic goods are several and not merely one (*EN* i 6, 1196b11–12). Still, this is consistent with its being the case that all intrinsic goods are univocally good, namely those which are loved and desired for their own sakes. Anything leading to these goods would fail to satisfy this criterion of intrinsicality and would be, then, only derivatively good, as conducive to what is intrinsically good.

The situation as we have it now, then, is this: Aristotle represents the Platonists as accepting the non-univocity of goodness, but only in the most minimal fashion. They agree that '…is good' is not strictly univocal, but they insist that the only division of note is between intrinsic and non-intrinsic goods. So far, the Platonists might reasonably have no objection to the representation, provided that the several intrinsic goods are good in precisely the same sense.[4] The core of their view would then remain intact, namely that there is only one Good, the Form of the Good, and everything intrinsically good is good by standing in some

in those terms. It is equally consistent with the claim that the intrinsically good is loved and pursued for its own sake because it is intrinsically good, which would presumably be congenial to the Platonist. In fact, though, as stated, it is equally consistent with neither of these claims, and might merely be recording a necessary co-extensivity with no implied direction of dependence.

[3] See § 6.3 for an overview of the Platonic motivation for distinguishing intrinsic and non-intrinsic predications of '…is good'.

[4] Some goods might be good both for the sake of the Good and also intrinsically good by being partially constitutive of the Good, in the way, for instance, that dining, attending the opera, and skiing may all be for the sake of a good vacation without being severally identical with the good vacation. There is, however, a question here as to whether the uniformity of the Form of the Good tolerates such a view. In the current context, however, one can allow some latitude, since Aristotle's response to the position he here offers the Platonists is our primary focus in what follows.

suitably mimetic relation to the Form of the Good. In effect, the only good which is good in its own right without qualification will remain the Good Itself, the Form of the Good.

To this the Platonists may add two further clarifying points, the first of which Aristotle overtly represents them as embracing and the second of which he makes no express mention of, but it seems implicit in the exchange. First, the Platonists can respond, and are represented as responding, that intrinsic goods do indeed all have a single character: intrinsic goods are those which are 'such as to be pursued and loved for themselves or in their own right' (*τὰ καθ' αὑτὰ διωκόμενα καὶ ἀγαπώμενα*; *EN* i 6, 1096b10–11). This characterization need not be entered as a *definition* of goodness, and presumably it would not be regarded as such by Plato himself.[5] Still, it might well be offered by him as a criterion or extensional marker of the good, since as he says in *Republic* 505e1–2 , the good is 'that which every soul pursues and that for whose sake it does all that it does'. This, then, brings us to the second clarification the Platonists might reasonably offer: if it is meant in two ways, goodness is meant in *only* two ways. Everything which is extrinsically good in precisely the same way, namely as being *conducive to the good*, as being such as to be good only because, and only to the degree that, it leads to an intrinsic good, one pursued and loved in its own right (*τὰ καθ' αὑτά*; *EN* i 6, 1096b10–11).

Strikingly, the position offered the Platonists by Aristotle is in effect a limited instance of his own apparatus of core-dependent homonymy. This is because all non-intrinsic goods are defined as good only by reference to the core instance of goodness, since the predicate '…is good' as applied to all non-intrinsic goods will be defined as *being conducive to the good*, even while, of course, the core instance of goodness, if it is definable at all, makes no mention of the goodness of those goods merely conducive to it. Hence, we have an instance of asymmetric account dependence.[6] It is none-the-less a limited instance, because, unlike richer cases of

[5] In *Republic* vi 506b, when asked to provide an account of the Good, Socrates demurs, lest he make himself laughable. This does not, of course, preclude his characterizing the Good in various ways. For the characterizations, see Shields (2008). Indeed, Santas (1986) contends that even within the *Republic* Plato offers two distinct theories of goodness, though he does not treat Plato's two theories as promulgating vying definitions: (i) the functional theory of i 352e5 ff, according to which '[t]he good of a thing is what enables it to perform its function well, i.e. its appropriate virtue' (1986, 102); and (ii) a 'metaphysical' theory, given in *Republic* vi, in terms of which 'the human good lies in souls and cities becoming the closest possible approximation to Forms/'. See also Santas (1985) and Singpurwalla (2010).

[6] It should also be noticed that when Aristotle lists the sorts of things regarded as not good in their own right, but as good 'because of these' (*διὰ ταῦτα*) things which are good in their own right, he goes so far as to use the sorts of relations he himself highlights when characterizing his own apparatus of core-dependent homonymy, as 'productive or preservative' (*τὰ δὲ ποιητικὰ τούτων ἢ φυλακτικά*; *EN* i 6, 1096b11) of things good in the core sense. See *Met*. iv 4 1003a35–36, where he speaks of non-core instance of '…is healthy' as the sorts of things which 'preserve or produce' (*τὸ μὲν τῷ φυλάττειν τὸ δὲ τῷ ποιεῖν*) health (cf. *Top*. ii 9, 114a30–b1, where, though, he is more narrowly focussing on a linguistic point and highlighting corresponding or co-ordinate terms (*σύστοιχα*), as, for instance, the inflected series *justice*, *just* person, *just* deed, *justly*), the latter three of which are given their meanings by the relation they bear to the first.

core-dependent homonymy, the senses of the predicate '…is good' are but two in number. This Aristotle signals by using his characterization of homonymous predicates, *being meant in many ways* (λέγεται πολλαχῶς), supplanting, then, his more usual 'many' (πολλαχῶς) with 'two' (διττῶς). Goodness is thus, on the proposal offered to the Platonists by Aristotle, not only a limited instance of core-dependent homonymy but the most limited instance possible.

7.2 An Ungainly Dilemma

If Aristotle's gesture of accommodation is so far in these ways surprising, his rejoinder is still more surprising, taking, as it does, the form of an ungainly dilemma presented to the projected Platonist position.

Aristotle proceeds by carving off non-core instances of goodness, in order to 'investigate whether things good in their own right (καθ' αὑτά) are spoken of as corresponding to a single Idea (κατὰ μίαν ἰδέαν)' (*EN* i 6, 1096b16). He then pauses to query which sorts of things might be regarded as good in their own right, noting, rightly, that some things might qualify for inclusion even if they are also pursued for ends beyond themselves:

> But which sorts of goods should one regard as good in their own right? Or are these those goods which are pursued even when taken on their own, as for instance prudence, seeing, certain pleasures, and honours are? For even if we pursue these because of something else, one would nevertheless regard them as goods in their own right (*EN* i 6, 1096b16–19).

If the dialectic is as we have so far sketched it, this question asks for an enumeration of intrinsic goods, that is, those which manifest the univocal goodness standing at the core of the limited core-dependent homonymy offered by the Platonists.

Fairly plainly, though, the actual Platonists are going to reject the presupposition of this question, since they maintain that the Form of the Good is the only thing which is good in its own right, and that every other good thing is good by imitative participation. This is presumably why Aristotle immediately moves to counter with another question, one which first correctly anticipates this Platonist response, only to push a further problem alleged to follow in its wake: 'Or is it that nothing except the Idea [of the Good is good in its own right], with the result that the Form (τὸ εἶδος) will be pointless (μάταιον)?' (*EN* i 6, 1096b19–20). Aristotle's own retort to the projected Platonist response is, somewhat surprisingly, to point to the futility of the Platonist's posit.[7]

[7] This fuller discussion is the subject of chapter 8.

One could in principle take his point about futility in either of two importantly different ways. The first way would in effect represent a departure from the axiological character of the discussion thus far, returning it to the normative direction it had taken before the intervention of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6. Taken this way, Aristotle's point would involve the thought that if the Form of the Good were the only intrinsic good, then it would be simply too remote from the sphere of action to play a role offered it by the Platonists. To be sure, this is a point Aristotle makes later in this chapter (*EN* i 6, 1096b35–1097a14); so, if taken in this first way, Aristotle's point would merely serve to prefigure his fuller discussion to follow.

Possibly, though, his point in this context may be more axiological than normative. In this approach, Aristotle's contention would be rather that if the Form of the Good were the only intrinsic good, it would simply not be fit for purpose.[8] That is, on this approach, Aristotle means to suggest that the goodness of the Form of the Good cannot alone account for the varieties of goodness we find displayed across the range of intrinsic goods, namely those goods sought and loved for their own sakes.

This second, more axiological understanding of Aristotle's point, although not the more natural of the two alternatives sketched, has the advantage of tying Aristotle's response to what follows immediately:

> But if there are other [things good in their own right alongside the Form of the Good], then the account <of goodness> will need to be shown to be the same for all of them, just as the account of whiteness in snow and in a pigment (*ψιμυθίον*) is the same. (*EN* i 6, 1096b21–24).

Aristotle offers the Platonist an alternative, namely that there are other things beyond the Form of the Good which are equally good in their own right. Presumably this is offered as a way of sidestepping the putative pointlessness (*μάταιον*) of the postulation of a single bearer of intrinsic goodness. If, though, there are a multiplicity of intrinsic goods which are nevertheless univocally good, it will fall to the Platonist to show that this is so. Just as '…is white' is predicated univocally of snow and of the lead pigment worn by actors—these diverse

[8] In speaking of the circumstance in which the Form of the Good alone is good in its own right, Aristotle uses a word he usually reserves for cases of futility or an unnatural sort of purposelessness, being *pointless* (*μάταιον*). So, for instance, in the last chapter of the *Gen. An.*, he observes: 'nature never falls short nor does anything pointless (*μάταιον*) among the things it is able to do in each case' (*Gen. An.* v 8, 788b20–21). An illustration in *Phys.* ii 6 makes clear that what happens pointlessly is usually keyed to a natural or expected end, as an occasion when one walks for the sake of healthy digestion but the walking fails to eventuate in the end sought. He expands: 'This is what the pointless (*τὸ μάτην*) is: whenever what is naturally for the sake of something else does not effect that on whose account it was [in the first place intended] and towards which it had been naturally disposed (*ἐπεφύκει*)' (*Phys.* ii 6, 197b25–27; cf. *De Cael.* i 4, 271a33, ii 11, 291b14; *Part. An.* i 1, 641b12–19; *Gen. An.* ii 5, 741b6, 788b20; *DA* ii 4, 415b15–22, iii 9, 432b21–22; *Pol.* i 8, 1256b20–22).

subjects are white in precisely the same way—then the many intrinsic goods $g_1 \ldots g_n$ will be the same if and only if the accounts of '…is good' as it applies to them are precisely the same, and so, among other things, readily intersubstitutable.

This Aristotle simply denies:

> But the accounts of goodness as it pertains to honour, intelligence, and pleasure are different and divergent (ἕτεροι καὶ διαφέροντες), precisely in the way in which they are good.

That is, the predicate '…is good' across these applications yields, upon inspection, divergent accounts:

- Honour is good.
- Intelligence is good.
- Pleasure is good.

If this is so, then, once again, the proffered Platonist rejoinder to Aristotle's axiological onslaught will come to naught. So, he concludes: 'It is not the case, then, that the good is something common corresponding to a single Idea (τὸ ἀγαθὸν κοινόν τι κατὰ μία ἰδέαν)' (*EN* i 6, 1096b25–26).

Taking that all together, we have a rather ungainly dilemma in response to the proposed Platonic concession:

1. Either there are (a) many intrinsic goods, or (b) one only, viz. the Form of the Good.
2. If (1b), then the notion of intrinsic goodness will play no role and the Form of the Good will be pointless.
3. If (1a), then the accounts of '…is good' as it applies across the range of intrinsic goods will be either univocal or homonymous as regards that range of good things.
4. In fact, the accounts of '…is good' as it applies to these sundry intrinsic goods differs, 'precisely in the way in which they are good' (οἱ λόγοι ταύτῃ ᾗ ἀγαθά; *EN* 1096b24–25).
5. So, if (1a), goodness will be homonymous across the range of intrinsic goods (and there will be no univocal Form of the Good).
6. So, either (a) goodness is homonymous (and there is no univocal Form of the Good) or (b) the Form of the Good is pointless.

So construed, if sound, Aristotle's argument does undermine Plato's position; but, even on that same assumption, it does so at a remarkable cost.

7.3 Fractured Goodness Fractured

The dilemma is ungainly in that its stated conclusion is that either goodness is meant in many ways, and so not univocal (with the result that there is no Form of the Good), or the Form of the Good is pointless. In the version closest to the text, at any rate, the argument does not structure itself by contending, for instance, that univocity is either true or false, but rather that there are either many intrinsic goods or only one. The resulting conclusion, then, is not that there is no Form of the Good, but only that if there is, it cannot play the role the Platonists expect of it.

The second premiss (2) explores the suggestion that there is only one intrinsic good, namely the Form of the Good. As we have seen, the claim that any such postulated Form would be pointless (*μάταιον*) can be taken either pragmatically or axiologically. Let us set aside the pragmatic interpretation, since that more normative interpretation is expressly the topic of the final argument of the chapter and its consideration may be folded into discussion of that argument. Understanding it axiologically, then, the premiss amounts to the claim that even granting the Platonist ontology, the Form of the Good is not fit for purpose: its failure resides not in its being practically irrelevant, but in its being explanatorily inefficacious.

If this is Aristotle's complaint, then the status of the Form of the Good as a cause (*αἴτιον*; cf. *EN* i 4, 1096a26–28) will be called into question. The question of the character of its failure then becomes salient. It is first of all natural to assume that it simply fails as an explanation of why good things are good. It implicitly asks: in virtue of what relation to the Form of the Good are we to say that other good things are good?

One source of difficulty, as Aristotle sees the situation, is perfectly familiar: a Platonic appeal to participation as the explanatory relation falls flat: it is empty talk and idle metaphor (*Met.* A 6, 987b4–14, A 9, 991a20–22). So, if they are disposed to rely upon their characteristic paradeigmatism, as the complaint thus construed implies, all the Platonists can say about any goods other than the Form of the Good is that they are good by participation, which takes them explanatorily nowhere. This would then shore up the claim that any appeal to the Form of the Good in this connection is explanatorily pointless (*μάταιον*). Taken this way, Aristotle's complaint, however familiar, would be quite general, giving voice to a broad concern he has about the explanatory efficacy of all Forms, and not merely the Form of the Good.

A more focussed version of an axiological complaint would be that the Form of the Good cannot account for the intrinsic goodness of things beyond the Form of the Good itself. Looked at this way, the complaint would be that the postulation of the Form of the Good levels all good things into two types: the intrinsic

goods—a category exemplified by the Form of the Good alone—and goods which are good by participation. Such a bipartite division would obscure a distinction among non-final goods most are wont to make, including presumably the Platonists (as at *Rep*. ii. 357c2–5), namely between those held to be intrinsically good and others merely instrumentally. How could a single relation account for this distinction? On this more targeted axiological approach, Aristotle's contention trains its sights on a different sort of explanatory inefficacy. Here the thought would be that the proposed sole intrinsic good, the Form of the Good, fails to explain why other good things are pursued and loved for their own sakes if they are also, alongside the Form of the Good, good intrinsically, in their own rights. In effect, then, since we must all agree that there are other things sought and loved for their own sakes—for instance, pleasure, honour, and intelligence—then on the assumption that the Form of the Good is the only thing good in its own right, these other goods must after all be good only because they lead to the sole intrinsic good. The goodness of the Form of the Good would then need to undergird the goodness of these other goods, though, on the current suggestion, no explanation of how this is so is forthcoming. So, the postulation of the Form of the Good would, so to speak, collapse under its own weight: by making it the sole intrinsic good, the Form of the Good would be incapable of explaining the intrinsic goodness of other things loved and pursued for their own sakes—the intrinsic goodness, that is to say, of other intrinsic goods.

This would then be the pointlessness of postulating a single intrinsic good: its goodness could not do the very thing for which it was wanted, namely to explain how and why other goods sought for themselves qualify as goods. Given that other things beyond the Form of the Good *are* also loved and pursued for themselves, postulating but one intrinsic good belies the *phainomena*. If the Form of the Good is meant to explain the goodness of these other intrinsically good things, then it can do so only at the cost of treating them as instrumental rather than intrinsic—for they are not intrinsic goods after all. There is, on the proposal mooted, just the one good: the Form of the Good.

Although not obviously misplaced, if this is the main force of the allegation of pointlessness, Aristotle's argument is inconclusive. The Platonist has available at least two sorts of rejoinders. First, as we have seen,[9] there are various ways in which one might understand the notion of intrinsic value pertinent to the Form of the Good. One could agree that the Form of the Good is the only thing with intrinsic value considered as an ultimate end, even while allowing that other things also have intrinsic value, and so are loved for themselves and not for the sake of the Good, because they are good in virtue of their own natures. If Plato thinks that what is fine and beautiful (the *καλόν*) has intrinsic value simply in

[9] See § 6. 2.

virtue of its being fine and beautiful,[10] it does not follow that it is to be pursued only for something extrinsic to itself. This remains so, even if, as Plato says in *Republic*, everyone pursues all that they pursue, ultimately, for the sake of the Good, that the Good is 'that which every soul pursues and on account of which it does all things' (*Rep*. vi 505e1–2). For there to be a tension here, or, more to the point, for there to be an explanatory inefficacy, the Platonist would need to hold that every soul pursues the Good *exclusively*, without at the same time pursuing other intrinsic goods, which are, of course, also pursued at the same time for the sake of the Good. After all, even an unreconstructed hedonist might enjoy a glass of Bordeaux with dinner for the sake of health as well as for pleasure, even while also pursuing health for the pleasure it yields.

These considerations put some pressure on Aristotle's second premiss, taken as axiological. It is not that Aristotle so understood has missed his mark altogether, but rather that a responsive, engaged Platonist need not fold in the face of a charge of explanatory inadequacy. At the very least, Aristotle will need to show how and why an appeal to a sole intrinsic good is explanatorily inefficacious—and that he does not undertake to do in the course of this chapter.

Be that as it may, from the standpoint of Aristotle's own axiology the next two premisses, (3) and (4), are by far the more important. The first of these, (3), observes fairly enough that if the Form of the Good is not the sole bearer of intrinsic goodness, and there are thus a plurality of things qualifying as intrinsically good, these good things will be either univocally or homonymously good. Aristotle then contends (4), that the accounts of '…is good' as it applies to these sundry intrinsic goods differ, 'precisely in the way in which they are good' (*οἱ λόγοι ταύτῃ ᾗ ἀγαθά*; *EN* 1096b24–25).

Here there are two matters to be explored. First, why does Aristotle suppose that the range of intrinsic goods he mentions are good in different ways? Second, and far more important prospectively, from the standpoint of an eventual evaluation of Aristotle's own axiology, what are the consequences of arguing for non-univocity at this level of fine-grainedness? So far we have seen arguments to the effect that goodness is inter-categorially non-univocal,[11] and another that it is in a limited way intra-categorially non-univocal.[12] This argument, if successful, escalates the claim of non-univocity significantly, by pushing for a form of intra-categorial non-univocity.

First, then, the claim: Aristotle asserts that the accounts of '…is good' differ across a range of acknowledged intrinsic goods: pleasure, honour, and intelligence (*τιμή*, *ἡδονή*, *νοῦς*; *EN* i 6, 1096b23–24), and indeed, he adds to this same

[10] This is the engaging suggestion of Wedgwood (2009), who suggests, in fact, that *καλόν* effectively *means* intrinsic value in Plato's *Symposium*. See also Price (1989, 19).

[11] This is the purport of the categorial argument, the topic of chapter 4.

[12] This is the purport of the argument from the sciences, the topic of chapter 5.

list in the next chapter, evidently generalizing his claim, '…and every virtue we choose because of itself' (*EN* i 7, 1097b2–3; *καὶ πάσαν ἀρετὴν αἱρούμεθα μὲν καὶ δι' αὑτά*). Assuming the more general formulation articulated in the following chapter (cf. *EE* ii 3, 1220b35–1221a14), Aristotle's contention emerges as arrestingly fine-grained: for any two intrinsically good virtues v_1 and v_2, the predicate '…is good' is non-univocal as applied to them. If we accept the more or less canonical list of virtues to recognize such states of character as courage (*EN* iii 6–7), temperance (*EN* iii 10–11), generosity (*EN* iv 1), magnificence (*EN* iv 2), magnanimity (*EN* iv 3), mildness (*EN* iv 5), friendliness (*EN* iv 6), truthfulness (*EN* iv 7), wit (*EN* iv 8), shame (*EN* iv 9), justice (*EN* v 1–6), and indeed some as yet unnamed (*EN* ii 7, 11108a16), among the practical virtues, and then scientific knowledge (*EN* vi 3), craft knowledge (*EN* vi 4), prudence (*EN* vi 5), understanding (*EN* vi 6), and comprehension (*EN* vi 10) among the intellectual, we are left with a query: what grounds the claim that these virtues cannot be called good univocally?[13]

In *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, Aristotle offers no argument for this claim at all, preferring instead mainly to assert without comment that various virtues differ precisely insofar as they are good. We should note, however, that given this fine-grainedness, even granting the conclusions of the arguments for inter- and intra-categorial non-synonymy advanced thus far, some new argument is required to establish Aristotle's further contention. He rightly and fairly demands that a univocal goodness ranging across all intrinsic goods would require intersubstitutability of account without violence or loss of meaning.[14] As a clear example he offers '…is white' as said of snow and the lead pigment actors wore, called 'white lead' in English but not Greek (in which it is called *ψιμυθίον*; *EN* i 6, 1096b23–24). We are meant to see in this example that the accounts (*λόγοι*) of '…is white', whatever these may prove to be, will plainly be intersubstitutable without loss of meaning. So much seems fair enough. The operative question, however, concerns the question of the case of '…is good' across the range of virtues. It is not obviously disanalogous to the case of '…is white'; neither is it, however, plainly analogous, as perhaps the Platonist would hope.

The question thus arises of whether Aristotle states or implies elsewhere an argument for the non-univocity of goodness at the level of fine-grainedness he now requires. Unfortunately, this argument has no clear parallel in *Eudemian Ethics* i 8; nor is there a clear parallel elsewhere in the corpus.

Even so, in order to avoid arriving at an early stalemate, where one side gainsays the other and the other offers only the same in return, one could look to the general tropes for establishing non-univocity in *Topics* i 15. So, for instance, one might deploy the test of contraries, which admits of two formulations (*Topics* i 15,

[13] The same question may of course be posed, more narrowly, if we restrict the virtues to the three expressly mentioned in *EN* i 6, namely honour, pleasure, and intelligence (1096b23–24).

[14] On account substitution as required for univocity, see *Categories* 1 and *Topics* i 15.

106a30–106b2). First, if the opposite of '…is φ' as applied to x is ψ, while the opposite of '…is φ' as applied to y is θ, then the predicate '…is φ' is non-univocal across these applications. Second, if the predicate '…is φ' has an opposite as applied to x but not opposite when applied to y, then, again, the predicate '…is φ' is non-univocal across these applications. As an instance of the first type, the opposite of '…is sharp' as applied to cheese is '…is mild', where its opposite when applied to an especially able student is '…is dim-witted'. Thus, we are licensed to conclude, says Aristotle, that the predicate '…is sharp' is non-univocal as applied to cheese and students. As an instance of the second formulation, '…loves' as applied to someone in an intense emotional state has as a contrary, namely '…hates'. If, though, we are thinking of someone engaging in a physical act of love, then '…loves' lacks a contrary altogether. So, once more, '…loves' across this range of applications is non-univocal.

Does this sort of test help break the stalemate? It is important to note here that the case at hand is not, for instance, as simple as '…is friendly' when said of person, a legal action, a business acquisition, and a football match. The test of contraries in those cases does seem to yield non-univocity. The case at hand, by contrast, is much less obvious, to say the least. It concerns whether '…is good' as applied to sundry virtues of character or intellect establishes non-univocity. So, for instance, we are asked to apply the test to:

- Temperance is good.
- Bravery is good.
- Truthfulness is good.

In these cases, the test of contraries yields nothing very determinate. It is not relevant to the case that the opposites of temperance, bravery, and truthfulness are intemperance, cowardice, and dishonesty. Rather, the question concerns whether the contraries of '…is good' as applied to these virtues diverge in any appreciable way. Presumably, as a first statement of the contraries, each case will be some version of '…is bad' or 'is a character failure' or something along these lines. Although there is some question about precisely how we should establish the contraries in these cases in any determinate way, there seems prima facie no reason at all to suppose that the contraries across this range of applications should not march in step. If so, then an appeal to this sort of test for non-univocity does not adjudicate a dispute between the proponents of univocity and their detractors. It seems inconclusive at best. Moreover, the same outcome accrues for the remaining tests of *Topics* i 15.[15] Hence, appeals to Aristotle's standard tests for non-univocity do not break our stalemate.

[15] On the full range of tests, see Shields (1999, chapter 2 § 4).

In a way these results are not surprising. The tests for non-univocity offered in *Topics* i 15 all deal by design with easy cases; their obviousness after all provides the motivation for selecting them as illustrations. The question arising in contentious cases concerns whether these sorts of illustrations in fact illustrate anything at all regarding less obvious cases of (putative) non-univocity. These more contentious cases tend to be more abstract, higher-level cases, including most centrally at present, of course, the predicate '…is good' itself. Unlike the earlier arguments of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, which wed Aristotle's commitment to non-univocity to other features of his metaphysics, including especially the doctrine of categories and conception of the unity of science, the current argument for a kind of hyper-fine-grained non-univocity simply passes without the benefit of any argument at all.

In the earlier parts of the chapter, Aristotle's procedure was more complex. He first laboured to ground non-univocity of the predicate '…is good' in the doctrine of the categories;[16] but that left him, if sound, with a result far more coarse-grained than he now seeks. Thereafter, he made his appeal somewhat more fine-grained by investigating how '…is good' applies within individual categories, as reflected in distinct practical sciences.[17] Nothing in either of those campaigns, whatever their level of success, prepared for the degree of grain he now seeks, where, evidently, each and every virtue proves to be good in a unique way.

We have, then, travelled a long way from the original contentions of the chapter and have also placed extraordinary demands on the sorts of standard non-univocity generators of *Topics* i 15. Yet we have trouble breaking out of an unhappy stalemate.

Let us move forwards, however, by supposing that Aristotle's reasons for regarding the virtues as good in distinct ways are compelling. The result will then be that goodness, already fractured, will be fractured yet again, to the point where one may legitimately begin to worry whether there is anything serviceable to be recaptured from the extreme non-univocity of the predicate.

This worry becomes especially pressing once we observe that judgements bringing virtues into commensuration, if not always plain, or easy, or uncontroversial, are common. At any rate, they certainly seem coherent. One might wonder, for instance, whether it is better to lead a life of intellectual virtue than to lead a life of honour. Both are good kinds of life, because intelligence is good and honour is good. Yet, if goodness is non-univocal across these applications, if, that is, the predicate '…good' as applied to intellectual virtue and honour require distinct accounts, then we cannot conclude that these lives are ordinally rankable in terms of their overall value. At the very least, in such a case, we have no guarantee

[16] This argument has been discussed in detail in chapter 4.

[17] This argument has been discussed in chapter 5, where, recall, with a surprising proliferation of intra-categorial notions of the predicate '…is good'.

that we can coherently believe that intelligence is better than honour, or that honour is better than intelligence, and so on across the remaining virtues. Yet we want to be able to say, with Aristotle, that 'it is better to be a philosopher than to make money' (*Topics* iii 2, 188a10–11). To the degree that such judgements are made, the non-univocity of the predicate threatens to make them unstable, or even incoherent. Without univocity, we are not guaranteed that the judgement 'honour is better than intelligence' or that 'a life of philosophy is better than a life of money making' is any more intelligible than, say, 'Maggie Tulliver is more acute than her brother Tom, who is less acute than a triangle'. If the predicate '…is acute' is non-univocal, meaning in one case *sharp-witted* or *clever* and in the other case *having three angles each below 90°*, then only the first comparison makes ready sense.

This is partly because we expect comparative judgements to respect univocity for scalar predicates:

- (US) For any scalar predicate '…is φ', if x is φ and y is φer than x, then y is φ in the same sense in which x is φ.[18]

So, if Cain is tall and Abel is taller than Cain, then Cain is tall, and is tall in the same sense and in the same context in which Abel is tall. (That the context of appraisal must be held fixed follows from the fact that if Cain is tall in context C* (the class of kindergarteners) and Abel is tall in context C** (the class of professional goal-keepers), we wind up with counter instances.) On the other hand, we do not say, or cannot readily say, that if Bjorn is quicker than Raul, then Raul is quick, and is quicker in the same sense that Bjorn in quick, when Bjorn is a slalom racer and Raul a keen mathematician. While we might try to make sense of such a judgement, it seems clear that we would need to advert to some manner of analogical reasoning from the outset.

When we turn to judgments regarding rankings of virtues, we seem to favour monotonicity. More to the point in the present context, Aristotle does want to bring at least some of the virtues into rankings, including, for instance, the general

[18] Note that this formulation agrees with some contemporary approaches speaking not of univocity but monotonicity. Monotonicity for unproblematically scalar predicates seems straightforward, and can be motivated directly, as by Nebel (2018, 881). He offers two forms of defence, one taking the comparative predicate (e.g. '…is taller') as primitive, and the second taking the positive, non-comparative predicate (e.g. '…is tall') as primitive. Regarding the second form of grounding: 'Monotonicity also follows from the second kind of view, on which the comparative form is derived from the positive form. On this kind of view, Muggsy is taller than Sally just in case there is some comparison class relative to which Muggsy counts as tall and Sally does not…Suppose, for *reductio*, that Sally is tall (in some context), that Muggsy is taller than Sally, but that Muggsy is not tall (in that context). Then there is some comparison class (namely, the one relevant to our present context) relative to which Sally counts as tall but Muggsy does not. But, by our definition of *taller than*, Sally would then count as taller than Muggsy. We have both that Sally is taller than Muggsy and that Muggsy is taller than Sally. This violates the asymmetry of *taller than*. Therefore, monotonicity must be true'.

judgement that a life of intellectual virtue is a happier kind of life than one led in accordance with practical virtue:

> For what is proper to each thing in respect of its nature is supremely best and most pleasant for it; and hence for a human being the life led in accordance with reason will be most of all this sort of thing [that is, supremely best and most pleasant]—since this [reason] more than anything else *is* the human being. This form of life will, then, also be happiest. Second happiest is the life in accord with the other kind of virtue [*scil.* practical virtue]' (*EN* x 7–8, 1178a5–9).

Aristotle's judgement here might be true or it might be false. It seems at a minimum, however, perfectly coherent. He thinks that one form of virtuous life *is better* than another form: a life of intellectual virtue is a happier life than a life of practical virtue. So, one life is better than the other, if, at any rate, a happier life is better than a less happy life for a human being.[19] This seems to suggest, in accordance with (US), that the forms of virtue respect univocity. It is not immediately clear how this is possible, if it is equally true that 'honour, intelligence, and pleasure are different and divergent (ἕτεροι καὶ διαφέροντες), precisely in the way in which they are good' (*EN* i 6, 1096b23–25).

The point of these reflections, it should be stressed, has not been to convict Aristotle of an insuperable difficulty in his axiology. Their point has, rather, been milder, namely to observe that fracturing goodness in the extremely fine-grained way this argument seeks yields prima facie difficulties for Aristotle's normative contentions. Once the axiology has been settled in the direction of a finely fractured form of goodness, normative comparisons are no longer straightforward. It remains to be seen, then, whether the prima facie tensions give way to genuine problems in his normative theory.[20]

7.4 Concluding Considerations

Aristotle offers the Platonist a sort of response to the dominant categorial and scientific arguments he has advanced in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6: he envisages them responding that they have not really been pursuing an unrestricted version of univocity, but only one ranging over intrinsic goods, those pursued and loved for their own sakes. While this sort of concession would be a surprising one for a Platonist to make, it nevertheless serves as a kind of moderated

[19] Note that to maintain this one does not need to accept '…is better than…' as reflecting a non-circumscribed good. On circumscribed and absolute goods, see § 1.2.

[20] These are the topic of chapter 9, and to a lesser extent, of chapter 10.

Platonism, one still a great distance from the sorts of non-univocity Aristotle has himself been advocating.

Aristotle's treatment of the projected Platonist concession turns out to be both perplexing and costly. It is perplexing because the dilemma Aristotle offers in response to the Platonist is ill-coordinated: either, he says, there is only one intrinsic good, the Form of the Good, in which case the Platonic move is pointless, or there are many intrinsic goods, as many goods as are loved and pursued for their own sakes, in which case the threat of non-univocity arises once again. Neither horn is devastating to the Platonist, though each makes a case to be heard. Still, the second horn, if finally compelling, proves costly. With the claim that the predicate '…is good' applies differently to every virtue, Aristotle introduces a reckless, unconstrained kind of non-univocity, one which threatens to vitiate his own insistence that at least some intrinsic goods can be brought into ready commensuration.

Now, it might turn out, of course, that goodness is extraordinarily non-univocal. This is, after all, the sort of result that Geach, for instance, actively sought.[21] Assuming, though, that commensuration requires either univocity or some functionally equivalent framework for arriving at ordinal rankings of intrinsic goods, Aristotle's fracturing of an already fractured goodness begins to place heavy demands upon his own axiology—demands, it seems, he cannot simply ignore as irrelevant to the axiological concerns of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6. For he rounds out the chapter by re-engaging the normative direction of his discussion, in an effort to show that even under the best of construals, the Form of the Good must prove irrelevant to our practical pursuits.

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[21] For our treatment and rejection of Geach's arguments, see § 4.4.

8
Normative Considerations Reintroduced

8.1 A Return to the Normative

Let us suppose, counterfactually, that all of the axiological arguments formulated and evaluated thus far fail and fall by the wayside. These arguments, factually speaking, have mainly though not exclusively taken aim at the Platonic univocity assumption: each in its own way has sought to show that goodness is meant in many ways, that there is no single, non-disjunctive essence-specifying account of the predicate '…is good'. From Aristotle's perspective, the Platonist's commitment to univocity, however economical, finds itself sliced by the doctrine of categories, by the serial character of good things, and by the diversity of the sciences. Indeed, even on the initially conciliatory conjecture that this assumption is meant to range over only intrinsic goods, those goods good in their own right and not for the sake of anything beyond themselves, the Platonic commitment to univocity still fails, according to Aristotle. For the predicate '…is good' has different accounts as it attaches to the various virtues and pleasures, even though these states belong to a single category of being. If these sorts of arguments succeed, the Platonic view of the good is a non-starter.

We are now entertaining the hypothesis, though, that they do not succeed, and that the Platonic view is not a non-starter. We may even suppose for this exercise that as far as univocity is concerned, Plato's approach to goodness is perfectly correct.

No matter. Even on that assumption, contends Aristotle, there is yet another sort of problem, one crippling to the Platonic approach to goodness in a different sort of way:

> For even if the good is one and predicated in common,[1] or is something separate, something good itself in its own right (*χωριστὸν αὐτό τι καθ' αὑτό*), it is clear that this would not be achievable in action or able to be acquired by a human being; yet that is the sort <of good> now being sought.
>
> Perhaps, though, it might seem better for someone to come to know this [*scil.* the Idea of the Good], with reference to the goods that can be achieved in action or acquired—since by having this paradigm (*παράδειγμα*) we shall know better

[1] On the alternative readings of this text, see chapter 1, n. 69.

> those goods which are good for us (τὰ ἡμῖν ἀγαθά) and if we know about these we will be better able to attain them (*EN* i 6, 1096b32–1097a3).

Here the problem shifts: Aristotle is no longer focussed on the axiological dimensions of the position under scrutiny. Rather, he allows for the sake of his closing argument that there is a single good, good in its own right, separate, and, most importantly, predicated in common.[2] This last concession is, in effect, a counterfactual entertainment of Plato's univocity assumption.[3]

Aristotle's dominant complaint is that even on this assumption, and even granting the Platonist her paradeigmatism, the Platonic position fails in the normative domain. His strategy closing the chapter, then, is to return the discussion to the sought-after circumscribed goods, those goods which are good for us (*EN* i 6, 1097a2–3). The proposal under consideration, then, as Aristotle portrays it, seeks to build a bridge from the context-invariant Form of the Good to the circumscribed good-for-humans and to do so by means of paradeigmatism. This is reasonable enough: if the Form of the Good is the single intrinsic good, then if it is to be of any use as an action-guiding principle, it had better also be somehow available for this role. Otherwise, we would be back in the zone of its simply being otiose, of its not being fit for purpose, with the result that its postulation would after all be pointless (μάταιον).[4] Plato needs, suggests Aristotle, to build a bridge from the Form of the Good to the action-governing principles, normative principles, we use in the conduct of our daily lives. The bridge envisaged is paradeigmatism.

Aristotle gamely allows that this sort of proposal is persuasive (πιθανότης; *EN* i 6, 1097a3).[5] Given the ensuing argument, however, this allowance should not be treated as given unconditionally: the point is not that Platonic paradeigmatism is plausible, but that *if* there were a univocal Form of the Good, then *if* it were to have an action-guiding role in human conduct, it could do so by serving as a kind

[2] This understanding of the argument contrasts sharply with that of Barney (2008, 295), who takes it as an existence argument, the final conclusion of which is: 'Therefore, there is no Form of the Good'. This does not seem to be stated or implied in the text of *N* i 6, 1096a31–1097a7a14. On the contrary, its existence is conceded in its opening lines for the purpose of the discussion. Even so, her general discussion of the passage contains much of value; in this sense, her mischaracterization of its argument does little to vitiate her approach to its content.

[3] This characterization agrees with Barney (2008, 294), who says of the argument of *EN* i 6, 1096a31–1097a7a14: 'Unlike most of the others, it seems to be a distinctively ethical argument, concerned with the bearing of the Good on practical reasoning'.

[4] See § 1.5.6 for the force of this complaint.

[5] Aristotle speaks of arguments or positions as being πιθανότης in two related contexts, where we might render it either as 'persuasive' or simply as 'plausible', where either might in principle be contextually restricted to 'initially plausible' or 'initially persuasive'. (The two meanings can overlap, but can also come apart as when, for instance, we judge a seductively fallacious argument or an artful lie as persuasive but not plausible. Like Plato, Aristotle seems to use the word in both senses: as plausible (*Meteor*. ii 3, 357b33; cf. Plato, *Crat*. 110d5, *Leg*. 791b22, 839d); and as persuasive (*Top*. i 2, 105a16, *Rhet*. i 2, 1356b27; cf. Plato, *Theaet*. 178e4, *Gorg*. 486a3, *Symp*. 223a8, *Leg*. 839d9). In many other cases, in both authors, the context does not settle the matter determinately.

of regulative paradigm. This is, indeed, the actual claim of the Platonists themselves;[6] so, his investigation of its role as a regulative principle is perfectly apt. On the Platonic approach, the Form of the Good is not merely an abstract principle, but is available to play a role in helping us secure the highest good for human beings. The general prescription, admittedly still rather hollow from the standpoint of generating specific directives for actions to be undertaken in this or that circumstance, would simply be that human beings should emulate the Good by drawing near it and becoming as like it as they are able to become.

The paradeigmatism driving this prescription can also be made more precise. Indeed, it can be made so just in the way Aristotle supposes it must be made precise if it is to be relevant to the direction of human conduct. A basket-weaver teaching her apprentices how to weave a basket will usefully and appropriately offer a good instance of the kind—a well-crafted basket—as a model for students to emulate in their own weaving. In order to show how coiling differs from plaiting or twining, she could, invariably would, offer a sample of the technique to show what is wanted. In an educational context, this would also presumably prove more effective than an abstract set of instructions ('Use osiers for the stakes and reeds for the randing, which are to be soaked and placed over and above the stakes in alternating patterns.'). In this way of thinking, a paradigm is an outstanding instance of its kind, one setting a standard as a regulative ideal. If there were a Form of the Good, allows Aristotle, it might in principle serve in this way as a paradigm, guiding those centring their gaze on it away from malignant missteps and towards the good sought, the good in action, and then also, more generally, the good for human beings.

Aristotle's response to this proposal is complex, proceeding simultaneously on more than one level. Before entering into his response, it bears noting that the shift in argumentative strategy Aristotle here effects already reinforces the characterization of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 as an axiological interlude in a normative treatise.[7] Here at its end, he is plainly departing from the substance and tone of the arguments offered thus far in this chapter. This shift should not be permitted to overshadow the tenor of the arguments so far. It is true that Aristotle believes that even if it were correct, Plato's metaphysics of goodness would prove to be irrelevant. Even so, he has spent the bulk of the chapter arguing that it is not correct. The importance of his having done so can be seen by inverting the sort of counterfactual argument Aristotle now advances: if there were a Form of the Good, separate, good in its own right, univocal, and serving as a paradigm, then the Platonic Form of the Good would after all be a contender, perhaps even the leading contender, as an answer to the question of the first book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. If, again counterfactually from Aristotle's point of view, there

[6] See § 1.1.5 for a characterization of Platonic paradeigmatism.
[7] See § 1.3 for a discussion of the axiological character of Aristotle's arguments.

were a Form of the Good serving as a regulative paradigm, then it would fix the circumscribed good, the good for human beings, and it would surely behove us to attend to its prescriptions.

8.2 A Paradigm to Nowhere

Aristotle evidently believes that the axiological concessions offered the Platonist at this juncture in the chapter may be freely and easily made, because they lead nowhere of any normative significance. His confidence here turns in part upon his conviction regarding the role, or, rather, the lack of any role, of a paradigm of the good in the practical sciences, as they are in fact practised. His argument comes in two waves, the first of which proceeds as follows:

> While this argument does have a certain amount of plausibility,[8] it would seem to be at variance with the [actual practice of] the sciences. For all sciences, while aiming at some good and paying heed to what is lacking, leave knowledge of <this sort of> good by the wayside. And yet if it were such a great resource, it would be unreasonable of craftsmen to be ignorant of it and not even to pay it any heed (*EN* i 6, 1097a5–8).

This first wave seems rooted in a simple observation: those actually engaged in scientific pursuits proceed oblivious to the paradigm putatively provided by the Form of the Good. Yet, their doing so would be inexplicable were the Form of the Good available as a paradigm: for every practical science aims at some good or other. That is, every practical science seeks to fill some void, and that void is precisely the lack of some prospective good or other: when treating a sick patient, a doctor aims at some missing good, namely the health of the patient. We would expect her, then, on the hypothesis of paradeigmatism, to look to the Form of the Good for guidance, just as an apprentice weaver looks to a sample weave for guidance when executing his craft. Yet simple observation reveals no such practice.

So far we might think the criticism fairly ineffectual. We do not expect every structural engineer engaged in bridge design to focus on proofs in analytical geometry when in the process of designing; but we do expect structural engineers to mind the principles of torsion determined by those proofs. One might reasonably, that is, expect the practical and productive sciences to respect a division of labour which implicates them in being bound by higher-order principles which

[8] Aristotle refers to the argument (*λόγος*) given at *EN* 1096b35–1097a4; 'Perhaps, though, it might seem better for someone to come to know this [*scil.* the Idea of the Good], with reference to the goods that can be achieved in action or acquired—since by having this paradigm we shall know better those goods which are good for us (*τὰ ἡμῖν ἀγαθά*; *EN* i 6, 1097a2–3) and if we know about these we will be better able to attain them'.

are themselves guided by still higher-order principles. In such a scenario, although it would of course be true that no structural engineer would need to read articles in the *Journal of Analytic Geometry* when engaged in the design of any particular bridge, it could nonetheless be true that she was aiming to conform to the principles there proven. More to the point, this might yet qualify as a kind of deferred paradeigmatism. At any rate, it would seem misleading, even captious, to insist that it would be positively unreasonable for a structural engineer to proceed without paying any heed to the principles of analytic geometry. In one way an engineer would not; but in another way, she certainly would. No casual observation of craft practice here would reveal anything one way or the other; indeed, it seems fair to say that even a detailed observation of craft practice would not reveal anything probative.

Perhaps. Yet Aristotle does not rest his point upon a cavalier observation of the practices of the practical and productive sciences. He continues:

> Moreover, it is hard to figure how a weaver or a carpenter will be benefited in his own craft by knowing this Good itself (*τὸ αὐτὸ τοῦτο ἀγαθόν*), or how someone who has beheld this Idea (*ὁ τὴν ἰδέαν αὐτὴν τεθεαμένος*) will be more versed in generalship or more of a skilled physician. For a doctor evidently does not even consider health in this way [*scil.* abstractly—let alone the Good abstractly], but considers instead the health belonging to a human, or rather, presumably, the health belonging to *this* human, for he treats one human at a time (*EN* i 6, 1097a8–13).

The argument now takes a modal turn. Aristotle moves from observing that no craftsman in fact looks to the Form of the Good for guidance to maintaining more stridently that even if craftsmen were to avail themselves of this paradigm, nothing at all would come of their doing so.

Together, then, these two points yield a coordinated argument against paradeigmatism:

1. A separate, non-circumscribed good would be useful to the attainment of the goods we seek, namely our good, the good for human beings, or the sundry goods we seek in our quotidian human activities, only if it could be known in such a way that it would serve as a useful paradigm *for us*.
2. If such a good were available as a paradigm, then (a) one would expect scientists and craftsmen to be mindful of it, and (b) one could readily imagine how the sciences and crafts could avail themselves of their (prospective) knowledge of it.
3. In fact, neither (2a) nor (2b) obtains: (a) the sciences in fact do not proceed with a view to any such paradigm, and (b) there is no clear reason to suppose that they should or, indeed, could.

4. Hence, a conjectured separate, non-circumscribed good would not be useful to the attainment of the circumscribed goods we seek, namely the good *for us* or the goods we seek in our quotidian human activities.

So put, the argument combines two thoughts, one factive and one modal.[9] Let us consider each in turn.

We have already raised one, rather blunt question about the factive point expressed in (2a) and (3a): why should one expect the practitioner of a craft of practical science, one who, let us agree, is seeking to produce something good, look to the abstract paradigm of goodness when weaving a basket or seeking to cure a patient? One might think this an unrealistic sort of demand, evidently requiring that abstract paradigms be invoked in the executions of even the humblest sorts of crafts. Further, one might even wonder how secure the judgement is that those executing crafts never pause to reflect upon the best way forward which would, or could, involve them in thinking about the good in a refracted way, where the general paradigm remained regulative if not constantly consulted. One need not, after all, be a philosopher to be a medic or a plumber, and nothing in Platonic paradeigmatism seems to demand otherwise.

Still, as far as the factive point expressed in (2a) and (3a) is concerned, one might counter that this is really just Aristotle's point. Where the normative force is concerned, the Form of the Good, even if it is available as a paradigm, mainly falls by the wayside. Here it is important to reflect upon the fact that Aristotle's closing normative argument, unlike the axiological arguments which have preceded it, is not an argument concerned with the existence of the Form of the Good. He is not seeking to show that there is no Form of the Good, and he is not even seeking to show that the Form of the Good is not available as a paradigm. On the contrary, for the purposes of this closing argument, he is granting the existence of a separate, univocal good, good in its own right and for nothing beyond itself. Aristotle is rather contending that even given all these assumptions, as a practical matter—which is to say, then, in the domain of normative ethics—no such good plays a role as a regulative paradigm. At any rate, where the factive version of the argument is concerned, the practitioner makes no such appeal. The basket-weaver may readily allow that she is striving to make a good basket, the best basket that she can weave. When asked whether she is, accordingly,

[9] Gerson (2005, 262) finds the argument puzzling for a different reason, namely: 'That knowing the Form of the Good should be irrelevant to ethical practice is a curious and ambiguous claim. Of course, if the Form of the Good does not exist, its irrelevance follows. But if the complaint is that theoretical knowledge is irrelevant to ethical practice, it is a complaint that applies to *Nicomachean Ethics* itself, for that work is largely theoretical'. The current interpretation takes it that Aristotle is for the purposes of this argument allowing that the Form of the Good exists; it is its status as an action-governing paradigm which he seeks to undermine. We return below to the question of the ways in which the *Nicomachean Ethics* qualifies as theoretical.

focusing on the Form of the Good as her paradigm of goodness, she will reasonably look away bemused and return to her work.

These considerations show that the factive version of Aristotle's normative argument has some point, but not a decisive one; in fact, neither side so far has said anything sufficient to silence the other. The proponent of the Form of the Good will reasonably contend that not every action aimed at filling a lack by producing something good need indulge in reflection on the regulative character of Goodness itself. Still, Aristotle may observe that this response already concedes the point being made, namely that paradeigmatism is from any practical point of view simply irrelevant. So, we find ourselves at something of a standstill: someone who says that analytical geometry is irrelevant to structural engineering is in a way right and in a way wrong. While no one needs to produce proofs, or even to reflect on proofs, in analytical geometry while designing a bridge, those proofs nonetheless undergird the tables of design codes deployed in structural analysis.

One might attempt to break the logjam by noting that Aristotle himself will allow that various actions are good-sensitive without thereby involving overt reflection on the ends of action *as good*.[10] So, for instance, one might reasonably expect the structural engineer to be sensitive to the principles of analytical geometry, without therefore needing to reflect upon them as regulative principles in the process of designing a bridge. Here the notion of 'sensitivity' can be made reasonably precise: an explanation of the processes and procedures deployed by the engineer will be full, complete, and correct only if those processes and procedures are themselves explicated as conforming to still further principles, namely those reflected in the proofs of analytical geometry. While no-one should think that those proofs exhaust requisites for successful design, which will, after all, need to rely as well on empirical knowledge of physical laws and of the structural performances of various materials in various sizes and configurations, it remains true that principles and practices actually employed will in fact conform to them.[11] Applying this analogy to the Form of the Good, one might suppose that deliberations in the practical sciences will, or must, proceed in a manner sensitive to the good, without therefore needing to engage in occurrent reflection on the

[10] The language of 'sensitivity to goodness' derives from Charles (2012, 238–243), who offers it in characterizing one model of Aristotle's conception of teleological causation: (242): 'In Aristotle's account of teleological causation, what occurs is controlled by a goal (as its *archê*) where (i) the goal in question is tied (directly or indirectly) to an agent's (or organism's) desires or needs and (ii) the agents or organisms are essentially organized to achieve such goals by good (or the best) means. At this point, one reaches bedrock in Aristotle's account: there are agents and organisms essentially organized to achieve certain distinctive goals: the ones which are good for those agents and organisms to bring about. There is a deep interdependency between certain natures (or organisms) and certain goods: there are natures which are organized to bring about certain goods, those which are good for those natures to bring about (or possess). These are organisms whose life will go better for them (or continue) if they achieve these goals. Their actions and organization are sensitive to and guided by what is good for them (given their natures)'.

[11] Here it is useful to compare Galileo, *Discourses and Mathematical Demonstrations Relating to Two New Sciences* (1732), Dialogue I, on the sense in which all mechanical reasonings are and are not 'founded in Geometry'.

Form of the Good. If so, they will be sensitive to the good. More to the point, it might play its role as a paradigm for practitioners of the practical sciences without their attending to it as they ply their trades.[12]

Whether either the Platonist or the Aristotelian should or would be satisfied with this middle way remains an open question. Their being so turns in part on the question of the exact purport of Platonic paradeigmatism. Looked at one way, treating it as merely requiring a sensitivity to the good seems to dilute paradeigmatism beyond all recognition. In any event, a decision procedure might surely be good-sensitive without qualifying as a form of paradeigmatism. Witness, indeed, Aristotle's own teleology.[13] Looked at another way, though, even allowing that one version of paradeigmatism might be understood as not requiring overt recourse to a paradigm in decision-making contexts, it makes it difficult or impossible to judge whether the factive version of Aristotle's normative argument succeeds. Insofar as the argument proceeds by a simple appeal to an observed practice, the observation required to vouchsafe the claim is neither simple nor innocent. Plainly one might be governed by a paradigm without stopping to ponder that paradigm. Then again one might pursue a practical or productive science in a good-sensitive manner even given the utter falsity of Platonic paradeigmatism.

These results ultimately serve to focus our attention on the thinness of the factive version of Aristotle's argument. Granting that we do not observe a doctor contemplating the Form of the Good when doctoring, we are hard-pressed to conclude on that basis the practical irrelevance of paradeigmatism. Ultimately, the suggestion that we are so licensed only serves to focus attention on the second version of Aristotle's closing normative argument, the modal version, which is in any event considerably more consequential. This argument is captured in (2b) and (3b), the claims that if the Form of the Good were available as a paradigm, then one could readily imagine how the sciences and crafts *could* avail themselves of their (prospective) knowledge of it, but that, alas, there is no clear reason to suppose that they should or, indeed, could find the putative paradigm of goodness useful or more broadly relevant for carrying on their work. If that is correct, then, again, even granting its existence, the Form of the Good would have no role as a paradigm and would thus be normatively idle.

Taking all that together, Aristotle's crucial modal claim amounts to this: even on the assumption of the existence of the Form of the Good, and even supposing that it is a paradigm, it is not possible that its being so could serve as a regulative model for those engaging in the productive and practical sciences. Looked at this way, Aristotle's final, normative argument provides a fitting close to *Nicomachean Ethics*

[12] See Annas (1999, chapter 5) for a discussion of the ways in which Neoplatonists understood the relation of the Form of the Good and practical pursuits.

[13] Here again, at any rate, as modelled by Charles (2012). The role of the good in Aristotle's teleology is discussed in §§ 9.3 and 9.4.

i 6: if the goal is to live and conduct oneself well (*EN* i 4, 1095a14–16, i 7, 1097a15–b21, iii 5, 1139b3, vi 5, 1140b7), then if it has nothing to contribute to that goal, irrespective of its alleged existence and its supposed intrinsic features, the Form of the Good contributes nothing to ethical enquiry. The argument thus punctuates the axiological interlude of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, calling our attention at once to the relevance of such an interlude and, as Aristotle sees things, its overdetermined success in eliminating the Form of the Good as a contender.

How forceful is this modal argument? Within the brief presentation of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, the crucial modal claim is left undefended. Presumably, a dedicated Platonist will allege that the argument begs the relevant question: on the theory advanced, there is a Form of the Good and, as a context-invariant encoding of the nature of goodness itself, it is available as a paradigm for human action.[14] Indeed, as we have seen, Plato himself seems to assert as much, when holding that the Good is 'that which every soul pursues and on account of which it does all things' (*Rep*. vi 505e1–2). As Plato goes on to allow, however, not everyone has a crisp view of the Form of the Good: every soul 'divines that it is something, but falls into perplexity and is unable to grasp sufficiently what it is; nor can one acquire a stable conviction about it as one does about other things' (*Rep*. vi 505e1–3).[15] In one way, this sort of remark is concessive as regards the Form of the Good as a paradigm; Plato allows that it is difficult to fathom, that most merely manage to 'divine' (*ἀπομανευμένη*) it, that one has no more than a presentiment of the Form of the Good (or, perhaps, more weakly, one can merely 'surmise' what it is; cf. *Rep*. i 349a3, *Crat*. 411b3–4; *Rhet*. 1373b7).[16] Yet he nowhere concedes the practical irrelevance of paradeigmatism; still less does he concede that the Form of the Good could not possibly serve as a paradigm for those seeking to engage the best alternative open to them, whether in the practical sciences or conduct more generally. On the contrary, he thinks acquaintance with it is a sine qua non.[17]

8.3 Three Developments of Aristotle's Brief against Paradeigmatism

That said, there seem to be at least three ways to expand the modal version of Aristotle's normative argument, in decreasing order of generality. First is the general thought, often voiced by Aristotle, concerning the value of regarding

[14] On Plato's paradeigmatism, see § 1.1.5.

[15] Cf. *Gorg*. 468b1–6, *Phileb*. 20d4–9, *Symp*. 206a3–9, *Euthyd*. 278e3–280e3.

[16] Plato's diction here is pregnant, given the resonance *ἀπομαντεύομαι* has with oracles and divine prophecy. Still, it need not tend in that direction. See, in addition to the passages cited in the text, *Rep*. vii 516d2, where it is shorn of its divine associations, and *Soph*. 250c1–3, where it loses even its future directedness.

[17] On Plato's conception of the ineliminability of the Form of the Good in the formation of just cities and souls, see Shields (2008).

Forms—all Forms, and so including but not in particular the Form of the Good—as paradigms. Second is the less general but still broad claim that ethical enquiry is not theoretical, but rather practical. Finally, third, related to the second but still more specific, is the thought that a non-circumscribed, absolute good, such as the Form of the Good is meant to be, is more or less by definition not a paradigm of the circumscribed good, the good for human beings. If any of these developments proves sufficient, then Aristotle will have vouchsafed the modal version of his parting normative argument.

As for the first expansion, Aristotle says more than once that Plato's introduction of Forms as paradigms is empty metaphor. So, for instance:

> Moreover, other things are not [constituted out] of Forms in any of the ways things are customarily said to be [constituted out] of things. And to say that Forms are paradigms and that other things participate in them is vapid talk[18] and poetical metaphor. For who focusses on the Ideas when producing something? For[19] it is possible for something to be and to come to be in some way similar to another thing even though it is not copied from it, so that [for instance] whether or not Socrates exists something could be like Socrates—and it is similarly clear that this would obtain were Socrates everlasting. Further, there will be yet more paradigms of [one and the] same thing, so that there will be still more Forms as well. For instance, the Forms pertaining to a human will be Animal and Biped at the same time as there is Human-Itself. Further, there will be Forms not only of perceptible things, but of [the Forms] themselves, for instance a genus of its species, so that the same thing will be a paradigm and a copy (*Met.* A 9, 991a20–b1; cf. Z 8, 1034a2–8; Alex, *in Met.* 79.3–80.6, 82.11–83.33, and esp. 86.15).

This passage assails the status of Forms as paradigms on several grounds, as does a fragment of Aristotle's *Peri Ideôn* (*On Ideas*) preserved by Alexander of Aphrodisias.[20] It thus provides some metaphysical context for the modal version of Aristotle's concern about paradeigmatism in practical and productive sciences.

[18] It is also possible that κενολογεῖν is not meant so caustically as this rendering suggests. Perhaps it is merely critical, registering the thought that the language is too abstract to be metaphysically contentful, in which case a better translation might be: '…is hollow talk', or, simply, '…is unduly abstract'. Cf. *Rhet.* ii 19, 1393a17, where the point seems to be that pitching an oration at too high a level will only serve to undermine the ends of persuasion; the speech would be wrong for the occasion, but not therefore inappropriate to another context of enquiry. It is difficult to lay too much emphasis on this word, however, since it is comparatively rare in this period of Greek, becoming more common only much later.

[19] Reading γάρ with E and *Γ* over τε with A^b, which is also favoured by Ross (1924, vol. I, 199) and Jaeger (1957).

[20] See Fine (1993) for an account of the treatment of Forms as paradigms in the *Peri Ideôn*. There the thesis shows up most markedly in the Argument from Relatives, on which see Fine (1993, 142–144 and 153–159).

The passage at first seems to suggest a point akin to the non-modal version of Aristotle's argument, by posing a simple rhetorical question: 'For who focusses on the Ideas when it is producing something?' Yet it goes on to provide an in-principle reason why no one *could* focus on it. Aristotle notes that possibly, and in fact, actually, something can come to be like another thing without having been copied from a paradigm. So, although a statue of Socrates could indeed be made by using Socrates as a paradigm, Eudoxus might become and be like Socrates in respect of being a philosopher without its being the case that Socrates served as a paradigm for him at all.

So far, then, as applied to the final normative argument of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, Aristotle's argument seems to make only the point that there being a paradigm of the good is not necessary for something to become or be good. This may seem fair enough, but so construed, the argument does not show that it is not possible for someone to look to a paradigm of Goodness for guidance. Nor does it show that a judgement about whether someone has in fact become good might advert to the Good, if the Good exists (as we are assuming) and serves as a paradigm (as we are querying). The question before us, again, is whether looking to the Form of the Good is necessarily misguided, whether a putative Form of the Good could or could not in principle be relevant to human conduct. One might concede that it is not necessary (whether or not Plato might wish to concede this) without relegating the Form of the Good to the normative dustbin.

One can appreciate, however, that Aristotle is in this passage not content to let the matter rest there. In fact his anti-Platonic polemic, including his initial remarks about paradeigmatism, is trained upon a more ambitious thesis, namely that things come to be what they are only by being in one way or another constituted by other things. One way of looking at Plato's metaphysics, memorably championed by Sellars,[21] would be to take paradeigmatism and the mimeticism that goes with it quite narrowly, so that perceptible objects are congeries of form-copies, images (εἰκόνες) travelling together, thus amounting to what Sellars dismissed as 'leaky bundles of abstract particulars'.[22] In terms of the current passage, one bundle, a sensible human being, might be made up out of a copy of Bipedal-Itself and Animal-Itself and, of course, Human-Itself.

Sellars's complaint, echoing Aristotle's, does raise an interesting question about the unity of sense particulars in Platonic metaphysics. However cogent that complaint may be, however, it does not cause any damage to the suggestion that the Form of the Good might play a role as paradigm in any given normative context. For here the role is not given by a primitive and immediate mimetic relation, but rather by an intermediary, more in line with the sort of paradeigmatism at play in the *Timaeus*, where the demiurge looks to the Forms as paradigms and then uses

[21] Sellars (1963). [22] Sellars (1963, 263).

them as models.[23] In the human analogue, in a decision procedure, someone deliberating might look to the Form of the Good as a model for implementation of the good, in much the way one might look at a scale model in architecture or a human subject in a life-drawing class as paradigms to be copied or emulated. Again, this is on the assumption that there is a Form of the Good, an assumption we understand as granted for the sake of the modal version of the final normative argument of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6.

For this reason, the first, most general expansion of Aristotle's closing argument fails to close the door on paradeigmatism.

The second expansion fares better. This is the less general but still broad claim that ethical inquiry is not theoretical but rather practical in orientation. Here too one can take a cue from Aristotle's general anti-Platonism in *Metaphysics* A 9, already cited in this connection. Aristotle's complaint in this chapter might be explicated in another direction by focussing on his suggestion that paradeigmatism implicates Plato in 'vapid talk', which, taken less stridently, might be intended in the caustic manner the translation given suggests, but might also mean something rather milder, in the neighbourhood of a manner of speaking which is 'empty' or 'hollow' relative to a context, that is, in the sense of being too abstract to be discipline-specific.[24] This is plausibly the sense of the expression given in a parallel text of *Eudemian Ethics* i 8, where Aristotle decries the practical significance of the Form of the Good in terms akin to his more general remarks in *Metaphysics* A 9:

> But if it is necessary to speak concisely about these matters, we say first that there being an Idea not only of the Good but of just any thing whatever is meant abstractly and in a hollow manner (λογικῶς καὶ κενῶς). This has been considered in many ways both in our popular and in our philosophic writings. (*EE* i 8, 1217b19–23; cf. *DA* i 1, 403a2).

Here being spoken of 'in a hollow manner' (κενῶς) might also be taken variously, again ranging from something entirely caustic to something much milder, if still critical, whereby it signifies only that such language is pitched at so high a level as to be contentless for the current context. The principles of fairness in distributive justice might well underwrite certain principles in contract law without its being the case that they would be rightly adverted to in settling a technical matter of breach of contract in a legal proceeding. Appealing to them would be out of place

[23] Although in no way concerned with the normative argument of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, Ross makes this point (1924, vol. I, 198–199): 'Aristotle ignores the account (*Tim.* 28C, 29A) of the Demiurge as making the world with "the eternal" for his pattern'.

[24] See n. 25.

not because they are vapid, but because they are too abstract to determine the case at hand.[25]

This milder manner of speaking would suit the context, since the normative remarks of both *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 and *Eudemian Ethics* i 8 speak precisely to the question of whether the postulation of a lofty Form of the Good might be so abstract as to be non-directive for any specific decision-making context. Here the remarks in *Metaphysics* i 9 provide some direction, as may be seen by considering a simple example. Suppose a pastry chef seeks to make a *croquembouche* for the wedding of a member of the royal family. This will require a superb *pâte à choux*, caramel, pastry cream and so forth. To make this a really good instance of the kind, the chef will need to excel in a full range of baking techniques, all rooted in a secure understanding of the necessary ingredients, the time of the assembly, the purely visual aspects of the pastry tower, and so forth. On the non-modal, factive side of Aristotle's argument, it is indeed difficult to fathom the chef stopping to reflect upon the model offered by the Form of the Good as she strains her custard through a fine mesh sieve. Still, that, as we have seen, is not a crippling concern. Yet perhaps now there is a more of a problem of principle, namely that the Form of the Good, precisely because it is a paradigm, is meant to be perfectly and purely good, context-invariant, and regulative. Yet a pastry chef preparing *croquembouche* might look to many different aspects of its being made well, of its becoming a good *croquembouche*: it must be light, flaky, creamy, rich, visually appealing, delivered in a timely manner to the right location, under budget, and so forth. These many goods are just that: many.

This is perhaps why, rather surprisingly, Aristotle's normative argument in the *Eudemian Ethics* i 8 gives way to a more familiar categorial point. Continuing from the same passage we have already quoted:

> Now, even if there are Ideas and above all an Idea of the Good, this will never be of any use in relation either to the good life or to actions, for the good is meant in as many ways as being (*EE* i 8, 1217b23–25).[26]

In so speaking, Aristotle connects the modal version of the normative argument given in the *Eudemian Ethics* directly to an axiological argument in a way we have

[25] Compare Burnyeat (2001, 20): 'Aristotle often berates the Platonists for the exclusively "logical" approach that leads to their bizarre theories. He does not mean that the reasoning is merely verbal; he uses "logical" arguments on his own behalf.… He means that their approach shows an unscientific craving for generality and abstraction'. Burnyeat is right: Aristotle does not mean to convict the Platonists of merely verbal reasoning (whatever, precisely, that is); but it does not follow that their 'bizarre theories' result from an undue craving for generality. One might hold that goodness is univocal simply because it *is* univocal, if, that is, it is in fact univocal. This seems a substantive question about the nature of goodness (or justice, or causation, or…) and not merely the result of a perverse desire to achieve maximal generality in every case.

[26] *ἔπειτ᾽ εἰ καὶ ὅτι μάλιστ᾽ εἰσὶν αἱ ἰδέαι καὶ ἀγαθοῦ ἰδέα, μή ποτ᾽ οὐδὲ χρήσιμος πρὸς ζωὴν ἀγαθὴν οὐδὲ πρὸς τὰς πράξεις.—πολλαχῶς γὰρ λέγεται καὶ ἰσαχῶς τῷ ὄντι τὸ ἀγαθόν* (*EE* i 8, 11217b23–25).

not seen in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6: Aristotle appeals here to an axiological argument we have seen developed exhaustively, namely the categorial argument.[27] There is no need for us to relitigate that argument here; yet in the current connection, as we now learn, it yields yet another sort of dividend, at least as Aristotle understands it.

This dividend—on the assumption that it establishes the non-univocity of goodness—is that the categorial argument highlights the multifaceted nature of goodness in ways undermining any claim to its being a useful paradigm in any actual deliberative context. On the assumption that there are irreducibly many varieties of goodness, seeking to follow a monolithic paradigm which is insensitive to categorial variations will surely fall short of yielding contentful directives regarding complex decisions. In this sense, the context-invariance of the Form of the Good, one of the very features—one of its ideal features in fact[28]—works against its utility as a paradigm. If it is in its essence context-invariant, then the Form of the Good will not be in a position to issue orderings in cases where cross-categorial conflicts arise. To illustrate, returning to our *croquembouche* pastry chef, the requisite of a timely delivery might enter into competition with the goal of a flaky pastry shell, which is to say that a good in the category of time might come into conflict with a good in the category of quality. Some ordering between these goods must be made. Reflecting on the Form of the Good will hardly help the chef arrive at a decision procedure. She may surmise that the timing should be as much like the Form of the Good as possible, as should, of course, the intrinsic qualities of the final pastry dough. Since the good itself prescinds from all categories and contexts, however, it will not yet offer guidance when goods in the category of time come into conflict with goods in the category of quality. Here, a good in one category is pitted against a good in another; but the Form of the Good does not discriminate.

Perhaps the moral of Aristotle's turn to the categories in *Eudemian Ethics* i 8 is that the Form of the Good will serve as a regulative paradigm in actual decision-making situations only if goods across the categories are ordinally rankable, which they are, in turn, only if '…is good' is univocal across categorially diverse applications.[29] Aristotle's conclusion in the categorial argument is that they are not. If he is right about that, then the axiological categorial argument will prove to have a more or less direct normative consequence, namely that it will be useless for conduct in the crafts and productive sciences.

This would be, in one way, a good result for Aristotle, since it would help underscore the importance of the axiological interlude he undertakes in both

[27] See chapter 4 for a discussion of this argument.

[28] On the distinction between ideal and non-ideal attributes of Forms, see § 1.1.1. On the status of paradeigmatism as an ideal attribute, see § 1.1.5.

[29] We take up the question of whether commensurability, understood as ordinal rankability, requires univocity in chapter 9.

Nicomachean Ethics i 6 and *Eudemian Ethics* i 8. In effect, Aristotle closes *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 by allowing that if there were in fact a Form of the Good, and if it were in fact a paradigm to be followed in normative contexts, then we would be right, indeed required, to focus on it when determining the good for human beings—if it could serve as a paradigm in practical contexts. In *Eudemian Ethics* i 8 he ushers in his categorial argument, nearer the start of the chapter, by indicating that he thinks that the conclusion of that argument is a reason to believe that the Idea of the Good, even if its existence is granted, 'will never be of any use' (*EE* i 8, 1217b23; *μή ποτ' οὐδὲ χρήσιμος*). So, investigating it can only be a waste of time.

In precisely that connection, however, it is important to notice a salient addition to the discussion of *Eudemian Ethics* i 8, one notably lacking in the closing normative argument of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6. This addition at the same time turns our attention to the third and final elaboration of the modal version of that argument, that a non-circumscribed, absolute good, such as the Form of the Good, cannot serve as paradigm of a circumscribed good, such as the good for human beings.

This approach adds a dimension lacking in the local deliberative contexts we have so far been considering: in the *Eudemian Ethics* Aristotle says that a hypothesized Form of the Good will be of no use not only in reference to actions (*πρὸς τὰς πράξεις*) but also, more broadly, in relation to the good life (*πρὸς ζωὴν ἀγαθήν*) (*EE* i 8, 1217b25). Let us agree that the first task of normative ethics as Aristotle pursues that subject is to determine the good for human beings. The point now is not merely that the Form of the Good is useless for actual deliberative contexts, but also, more generally, for the higher-order task of determining the circumscribed good the identification of which is the first task of normative ethics. The suggestion is here rooted not directly in paradeigmatism, but in a larger, more abstract question about the relation between the existence of a non-circumscribed good, which is good in its own right and not merely for someone or as something, or in relation to someone or something, or in this or that context, or in terms of realizing this or that function, or as achieving this or that goal, but is simply good, absolutely, simpliciter.[30] If we want to join Aristotle in determining what the best good is (*τἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ ἄριστον*; *EN*1094a22; cf. 1099a24), and we mean by that, implicitly, a circumscribed good, that is, namely, the best good for human beings, then, he suggests, focussing on the Form of the Good will be of no use whatsoever.

One might then understand Aristotle as offering a quite general argument, departing from the conclusion of his categorial argument and ending in a conclusion about the relation, or lack of any relation, between an absolute good and a circumscribed good, the good for human beings. The conclusion of the categorial

[30] On the distinction between an absolute good and circumscribed goods, see § 1.2.

argument was simply that goodness is non-univocal, which Aristotle inferred from an argument whose key premiss was that if goodness were something universal, common and single, 'it would not be spoken of in all the categories, but in one only'(*EN* i 6, 1096a28–29). In his discussion in *Eudemian Ethics* i 8, he very clearly uses this as a basis for his conclusion that the putative existence of the Form of the Good is useless for determining the highest good for human beings.[31] It is, however, not immediately clear how one is to bridge the gap from:

(P_1) Goodness is non-univocal.

to

(C) Even if there is a Form of the Good, it 'will never be of any use' for determining the good life for human beings.

Indeed, one might think the entire inference is bound to be off kilter, since presumably if the predicate '…is good' is non-univocal, there is no Form of the Good. It seems, then, that so construed Aristotle has granted the assumption of the existence of the Form of the Good only to deny it summarily.

One way to avoid this unwanted conclusion would be to focus on the crucial premiss of the categorial argument, which relies on the thought that if goodness were univocal it would be used in no more than one category of being. Here one might observe that Aristotle had earlier introduced the Idea of the Good into *Eudemian Ethics* i 8 by representing its unnamed adherents as holding a series of tightly knit theses:

> For they say that the good itself (*αὐτὸ τὸ ἀγαθόν*) is the best (*ἄριστον*) of all things, and that it belongs to the good itself to be both [good] in a primary way among good things and to be the cause by virtue of whose presence to them other things are good. Both of these belong to the Idea of the Good (*τῇ ἰδέᾳ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ*). By 'both' I mean: being primary among good things, and being the cause by virtue of whose presence to other good things they are good. For the good is said most truly of the Idea of the Good, for other good things <are good> by participation and by their likeness (*ὁμοιότητα*) to this. And this is primary, since if the thing being participated in were destroyed, so too would the things participating in the Idea—which are said to be <good> by virtue of their participating in it—be destroyed (*EE* i 8, 1217b2–12).

[31] This is clear in any event if the text, which is in a difficult condition, is read as continuous and containing the grounding particle 'for' (*γάρ*) at *EE* i 8, 1217b27.

Although a bit rambling and repetitious as we have it, the text offers three pertinent characterizations of the Form of the Good.

First, and most important, is the thought, twice expressed, that the Form of the Good is good in a primary way (πρώτῳ), implying, then, a distinction between a primary way of being good and other, secondary, or even tertiary, ways of being good. The goods which are good in non-primary ways are good by courtesy of the presence (παρουσία) of the Form of the Good to them, and by virtue of their participating in it and of their being likenesses (ὁμοιότητα) of it. Second, in keeping with this, goodness is scalar, the Form of the Good, as good in the primary way, is the best (ἄριστον) good among good things and that of which goodness is most truly predicated (τἀγαθὸν λέγεσθαι κατ' ἐκείνης ἀληθῶς). Finally, third, the Form of the Good, as a primary good, is the cause (αἴτιον) of the goodness of other good things. Taking this last claim at face value, we should expect all good things, on the proposal under scrutiny, to be good in precisely the same way, by dint of their participation in the Form of the Good, regardless of their categorial home (if, that is, the proponents of the scrutinized view will comply in allowing that they have categorial homes).[32] Indeed, talk of the Form of the Good being 'present' (παρουσία) to goods which are derivatively good is, however vaguely indicated, evidently introduced as a specification of its status as the cause (αἴτιον) of their goodness.

These three commitments have a sort of levelling effect: there is one primary good, and one way of its being a cause of the goodness of non-primary goods, namely participation and the likeness (ὁμοιότης) it occasions. Aristotle's suggestion about the uselessness of the Form of the Good for determining the circumscribed good for human beings turns, then, not on a narrow point about paradeigmatism, but rather on the thought that circumscribed goods as such are so variegated, and so beholden to the kinds determinative of them, that a single resemblance relation will perforce be explanatorily impoverished to the point of vacuity.

If this is correct, then Aristotle's appeal to the categories will be too blunt to secure his point, but it will be relevant all the same, since in sifting through the candidates for the good for human beings—say, the life of pleasure, or honour, or contemplation—the single, scalar, univocal conception of goodness will tell us only, at most, which things most resemble the Form of the Good, but not thereby which degree of resemblance is best suited to human beings, or, more generally, to any given kind *K*.

This last point might sound underwhelming to a dedicated Platonist like Eustratius, but it finds an additional form of support in an under-appreciated

[32] In this connection, and especially since Aristotle relies upon his categorial argument to shore up his criticisms here, it is worth recalling the judgement of Santas (1989, 146): 'An obvious weakness in this argument is that it relies on Aristotle's own theory of categories; since that theory clearly contradicts and is a rival to Plato's theory of separate Forms, the argument begs the question'.

feature of Aristotle's account of the choiceworthy (αἱρετόν).[33] This is that he denies that 'better than' (βελτιόν) and 'more choiceworthy than' (αἱρετώτερον) always march in step. To see why he thinks this, let us begin by agreeing with Aristotle that it is better to be a philosopher than to be someone who spends her days conducting business transactions (*Topics* iii 2, 118b10–11). Still, in thinking about the relation between the *better than* relation and the *more choiceworthy than* relation, Aristotle contends:

> And things derived from prosperity are better (βελτίω) than things derived from necessity—and sometimes they are also more choiceworthy (αἱρετώτερα) as well. For living well is better than living, and living well is derived from prosperity, while living is itself a necessity. Sometimes, though, better things (τὰ βελτίω) are not also more choiceworthy (αἱρετώτερα); for if something is better it is not necessary that it is also more choiceworthy: to be sure, philosophizing is better than conducting business, but it is not more choiceworthy for someone in need of the necessities of life (*Top*. iii 2, 118a6–11).[34]

One natural way of taking this passage involves distinguishing between what is better simpliciter and what is choiceworthy in a given context, or more choiceworthy for one kind but not for another, where this would implicate Aristotle in a distinction between an absolute and circumscribed conceptions of goodness. One might think that some things are better than others tout court, without inferring that they are therefore better for members of kind *K* or for those finding themselves in context *C*. In this way, the absolute good will prove non-projectible.

In the current dialectical context, this cleavage between being *better than* and being *more choiceworthy than* helps bridge the gap in Aristotle's discussion in *Eudemian Ethics* i 8. The task was to prescind from individual practical choices and to begin thinking of the ways in which one might regard the Form of the Good as useless for determining the human good (πρὸς ζωὴν ἀγαθήν) (*EE* i 8, 1217b25). At first, the categorial argument upon which he relied seemed to offer no immediate support; nor did the putative problems of paradeigmatism already canvassed. We now find, however, a more abstract construction to be put on the argument—which perhaps also helps explain why Aristotle twice demurs from discussing the argument on the grounds that doing so would be too abstract for his current preoccupation. (This was the sense of its being rather too abstract and hollow (λογικῶς καὶ κενῶς) to give normative guidance; *EE* i 8, 1217b19–23.)

[33] For an excellent discussion of the principles of Aristotle's rational choice theory, see Sahlin (1993).

[34] *Top*. iii 3, 18b6–11 contrasts 'things derived from prosperity' (τὰ ἐκ περιουσίας; Revised Oxford Translation, questionably, 'superfluities') from things derived from necessity (τὰ ἐκ τῶν ἀναγκαίων), where the context makes clear that 'things derived from prosperity are not, or not only, idle luxuries, but include entirely valuable activities which require leisure (or freedom from toil; σχολή), including philosophy itself.

This is that now the Form of the Good, as an absolute Good, cannot provide guidance for determining what is choiceworthy for all kinds in all contexts. Since the choiceworthy and the better may come apart, even one who grants the existence of the Form of the Good, and indeed its status as a paradigm, and even the corollaries that goodness is scalar and that good things are better or worse consequent upon their degree of likeness (*ὁμοιότης*) to the Form of the Good, will not thereby be put into a position to make a determination for what is choiceworthy for someone situated as a member of a given kind *K* in a given context *C*. This is why, then, the Form of the Good 'will never be of any use in relation either to the good life or to actions' (*EE* i 8, 1217b23–24).

Taking that altogether, Aristotle's brief modal argument against the practical utility of the Form of the Good admits of at least three different expansions. The first two are trained on the role of the Form of the Good in individual deliberative contexts, where its status as a paradigm is prominent. The third, mentioned in *Eudemian Ethics* i 8 but not in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, focusses instead on the role the Form of the Good might be thought to have in determining not the best alternative among a range of alternative actions, where Aristotle's illustrations focus on crafts and practical sciences, but on the more general matter of determining the best life for human beings. Here paradeigmatism recedes somewhat, in favour of a more abstract reflection on the connection between an absolute good, as the Form of the Good is meant to be, and circumscribed goods, such as the good for human beings.

Although the more abstract argument needed for this conclusion is left unspecified in the *Eudemian Ethics*, the discussion there does point to a natural sort of completion drawn from *Topics* iii, where Aristotle shows how in some contexts 'better than' (*βελτιόν*) and 'more choiceworthy than' (*αἱρετώτερον*) come apart. When they do, their divergence opens a gap in any attempt to derive a circumscribed good from an absolute good which, by its very nature, remains aloof from the context- and kind-sensitive features of circumscribed goods. This, then, provides some grounds for Aristotle's complaints that the appeals to the Form of the Good in even fairly high-level normative contexts as determining the best good for human beings invariably implicates one in speaking altogether too 'abstractly and in a hollow manner' (*λογικῶς καὶ κενῶς*).

8.4 Concluding Considerations

Aristotle closes out his axiological interlude in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 by returning his discussion to its primary normative focus. In his final argument, he changes tack by allowing the existence of a Form, the Form of the Good, which his axiological arguments have, throughout the chapter, sought to discredit. He moreover

allows that this Form be just the sort of paradigm its proponents—which is to say his axiological opponents—make it out to be.

These concessions, Aristotle concludes, are easy to make, since nothing is to be gained from postulating a Form of the Good construed as a univocal cause of all good things, as a paradigm towards which those seeking to choose the best route among competing alternatives turn. His primary argument in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 for offering this assessment divides into two strands, one factive and one modal. On the factive side, on the postulation of the existence of the Form of the Good, one should expect to find those in the crafts and practical sciences striving to achieve good results by turning to it as a paradigm. This is, after all, just what a paradigm is meant to be. Yet upon even a casual inspection of the practices of those engaged in such activities, we find no such thing. On the modal side, Aristotle argues more aggressively that not only do we not espy such activity amongst the practitioners, but even if for some reason they tried to conduct their affairs in this way they would fail: even if there were a general paradigm of goodness it could not fulfil its presumed purpose where quotidian life is concerned. In short, no perfectly general paradigm could yield sufficiently specific directives to those engaged in deliberation. This more demanding argument is of course harder to secure, and, unsurprisingly, Aristotle's brief but suggestive remarks take us only part of the way.[35]

One further layer of complexity to Aristotle's normative argument emerges in the parallel chapter of *Eudemian Ethics* i 8, where, in contrast to *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, Aristotle opens rather than closes his chapter with an overt discussion of the possibility of a normative role for the Form of the Good. This way of proceeding offers a different sort grounding, one in which Aristotle seeks to rest his normative argument directly upon his categorial argument, which, in both treatments, seeks to show that there can be a unified, univocal, single Form of the Good. This permits Aristotle to widen the focus of his normative reservations from specific deliberative contexts to comparatively abstract, but still normative questions focussing on the determination of the good life for human beings.

Here again, however, Aristotle maintains that the Form of the Good plays no role: as an abstract, hollow, context-invariant ideal entity, it offers no directives about what is most choiceworthy for a human being, either in general, about the conduct and direction of human life, or in particular, pursuant to any given deliberative moment in any specific place or time. As for the more general point, where one might hope for some guidance, because the final good for human beings

[35] This agrees, if less than emphatically, with Barney (2008, 317–318), who finds: 'I conclude that the argument from the crafts [*scil.* the argument of *EN* i 6, 1096a31–1097a7a14] fails—or at any rate fails to be what we and Aristotle might have hoped for, namely a genuinely independent argument against the Platonic Good as a postulate of practical reason'.

must be more choiceworthy than all other intrinsic goods (*EN* ii 3, 1104b30–35, viii 2, 1155b18–27, x 2 1172b9–28; *Top*. iii 3, 118b27–37), even if the Form of the Good tells us what is most like the Good Itself, it would not automatically follow that it thereby identified *our good*, the good for human beings. For what is better and what is more choiceworthy may diverge, depending upon those in the kind making the choice and the circumstances in which they find themselves making it. If this is so, concludes Aristotle, the Form of the Good will be of no use for the matter before us: how it is best for us, human beings, to live well.

One might assail this argument in various ways, of course. A different sort of consideration arises, however, if it is permitted to stand. If there is no Form of the Good, or, if there is and yet it is impotent with regard to offering directives about what qualifies as most choiceworthy for human beings, then we are once again, evidently, confronted by a world of value fragmentation, certainly where any actual normative considerations are concerned, but perhaps also, if the axiological arguments of the chapter prove equally unassailable, then metaphysically as well. A question thus arises: how, if at all, will these results bear upon Aristotle's own normative pursuits?

In answering this question, we may follow the example Aristotle himself sets in his return to normative theory in the closing section of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6. We may grant him his conclusions, as he grants the Platonist hers, and then turn to the question of how we are to proceed in the value-fragmented world we inhabit. Thereafter we may ask, one last time, whether the rejection of Platonism in fact propels us into any such world.

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9
Good, Bad, Better, Worse

Aristotle's arguments against Plato's Form of the Good have left a complex legacy. When we explicate them, we find at a minimum that they are more complicated than they first seem; we also find that they are not as decisive as the relatively brusque presentations of them in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 and *Eudemian Ethics* i 8 can make them appear. Even so, they raise legitimate questions about Plato's Form of the Good—about its existence, about its explanatory efficacy, about its putative univocity, about its ideality, about its use as a paradigm in normative contexts. Aristotle's arguments show that Plato's axiological commitments embroil him in difficulties, even if they do not show that Plato is incapable of mounting responses that would engage the sympathies of a neutral critic.

Easily lost in this dialectic is one evident advantage in Plato's metaphysics of goodness, one that presumably served as a motivation for Plato's postulation of the Form of the Good in the first place. This is that the Form of the Good, if it exists, and if it serves, precisely as Plato contends, as a paradigm for all good things, then it offers a sort of standard by which any two things can be compared.[1] Although Platonic paradeigmatism needs to be given content and made precise if it is to be defensible, there is some point in trying to do so. If successfully articulated and defended, Platonic paradeigmatism offers one key advantage to Plato's approach to rational choice: the Form of the Good offers a single measure for weighing goods, which measure we might term the *propinquity metric*. That is, in determining how to act, or to assess the goodness of an action or a state of affairs, one can always appeal, ultimately, to the Form of the Good as the ultimate adjudicator. The closer an action or state of affairs is to the Good, the more it emulates the Good, and so the better it is. This is presumably why Plato finds himself at liberty to assert, without qualification, that 'everyone seeks the things that really are good…every soul pursues the good and does whatever it does for its sake' (*Rep*. 505d8, d11–el).[2] When given a choice, one will seek what is better, what is really better and not merely apparently so. What is really better is what more closely approximates the Form of the Good.[3] This assumes, rightly or wrongly,

[1] On Plato's paradeigmatism, see § 1.1.5; on Aristotle's doubts about paradeigmatism, see chapter 8.

[2] '*ἀλλὰ τὰ ὄντα ζητοῦσιν…Ὅ δὴ διώκει μὲν ἅπασα ψυχὴ καὶ τούτου ἕνεκα πάντα πράττει…*' (*Rep*. 505d8, d11–el); Cf. *Gorgias* 462b2–6, *Meno* 77b, *Phaedo* 98c2–3.

[3] Cooper (1999, 144–145): One who knows the Form of the Good 'recognizes a single criterion of choice: What, given the circumstances, will be most likely to maximize the total amount of rational order in the world as a whole?'

that between any two open courses of actions, one is better than the other unless each is as good as the other, in which case they are tied and there is no rational choice to be made from the standpoint of their goodness. Each nail in a bag of nails is as good as every other; one picks one at random without deliberation.

Against this way of thinking, Aristotle has complained that even if one were to grant its existence, the Form of the Good would offer nothing by way of practical guidance in the conduct of our lives.[4] Even if it could be shown to obtain, Plato's axiology would be, he thinks, normatively otiose. Aristotle asks, in effect, for some reason to suppose that Plato's propinquity measure is practicable. This is, of course, a perfectly fair question for him to pose.

One may thus ask fairly in return whether Aristotle's criticisms of Plato's Form of the Good yield a conception of goodness that fares better or worse in this regard. One may pose this question most fruitfully by supposing that the cumulative effect of Aristotle's assaults on Plato's univocity assumption succeed. Let us, then, simply grant them, as a hypothesis. We will assume, that is, just as Aristotle contends, that goodness is not 'something common, universal, and one' (*κοινόν τι καθόλου καὶ ἕν*, *EN* i 6, 1096a28). Having made that assumption, the question arises: how does one proceed when adjudicating between various goods, including goods which cross, or seem to cross, completely different domains. Where the good of an ecosystem and the good of a mining corporation seem to conflict, how is one to determine which good is better? More to the point, how does Aristotle propose that we proceed in the absence of a Platonic propinquity measure? As soon as we pose this question, we uncover a deep tension in Aristotle's own axiology. This tension has immediate repercussions for his own normative theory.

9.1 A Tension in Aristotle

On the surface, Aristotle's axiology embraces an inconsistent triad of propositions. Whether the inconsistency cuts very deep, or is in the end merely verbal, is unclear, and so a matter to be investigated. This sort of investigation is best served by stating the case against Aristotle as forthrightly as possible.

The inconsistent triad in question is this:

- Value Multivocity (VM): goodness is non-univocal.
- Value Commensurability (VC): For any value property φ, x, and y are commensurable as φ only if x and y are univocally φ.
- The Commensurability of the Good (CG): good things are commensurable as good.

[4] This contention is discussed in detail in chapter 8.

Taken unrestrictedly, these theses do seem to form an inconsistent triad. If goodness is non-univocal, then if value commensurability requires univocity, good things are incommensurable. Hence, if he holds that good things are commensurable, then Aristotle seems constrained to give up, or qualify, either Value Multivocity or Value Commensurability.

More fully, Value Multivocity tells us that goodness is non-univocal, that there is no single, non-disjunctive essence-specifying account of goodness. Value Commensurability denies that φ-things which are non-univocally φ can be judged relative to one another as φ-things. If Jacob is tall and Amber is tall, then we can readily determine which of the two, if either, is taller. It seems we have exactly three possibilities: Jacob is taller than Amber; Amber is taller than Jacob; or neither is taller than the other, because they are the same height. By contrast, if we say that Matisse's Blue Nude is blue, meaning that it exemplifies the colour blue, and that Camus is blue, meaning that he is undergoing a bout of ennui, we cannot readily determine which, if either, is bluer. So too for value predicates, including goodness: if goodness is univocal then we can in principle rank all good things as we rank all tall things, but if goodness is non-univocal, then at the very least we will need a special account of their comparability. (One can rank them 'in principle' because even if they are perfectly univocal, there may be formidable epistemic problems in effecting the rankings.)

Yet Aristotle, who argues for the non-univocity of goodness, seems perfectly prepared to compare a broad cross section of goods as good: the activity of reason is better than the having of even a constellation of practical virtues in the absence of wisdom, for instance (*EN* x 7, 1077b17–26), and it is better to be a god than a human being (*EN* vi 7, 1141a20), and it is better to be a human being than a fish (*Gen. An.* i 23, 731a25–b4, 732b28–29). More generally, Aristotle seems perfectly willing to offer extremely broad, cosmic rankings, ranking god above humans and humans above non-human animals, the former because god is in an uninterrupted state of intellectual activity which humans manage only intermittently, if at all, and the latter because reason is superior to perception.[5] Evidently, then, unless goodness is univocal across these applications, there is a question as to how he effects these rankings.

Immediately, however, we should take note of the fact that predicates can be univocal across one domain of application and non-univocal across another. This is because every judgement of univocity or non-univocity is domain-specific and predicate-relative. So, every claim that φ is non-univocal is in fact shorthand for saying that '…is φ' is non-univocal as applied to a and b in domain Δ. So, for instance, '…is blue' will be univocal as applied to paintings by Matisse and the sky but non-univocal as applied to paintings and moody existentialists. By the same

[5] See Bodnár (2005) for a discussion of this and like hierarchies.

token, two things can be non-univocally φ but univocally ψ. Thus, a statue honouring Camus and Camus himself will be non-univocally humans and univocally masses. Indeed, taking both domain- and predicate-relativity together, it is possible for a Jaguar to be costlier than a Mercedes in the domain of sticker prices but less costly than the same Mercedes in terms of its environmental impact—if the Jaguar is an expensive electric vehicle and the Mercedes a moderately expensive diesel vehicle.

These examples are fairly clear. Matters become comparatively murky when asking whether '…is good' applies univocally or non-univocally to a group of individuals in a given domain, each of which has some claim to be good. Still, importantly, these sorts of examples show how Aristotle could consistently hold that good is non-univocal even while maintaining *within* the circumscribed domain *good-for-humans*, that wisdom is better than bravery or that *eudaimonia* is better than pleasure. His offering these sorts of comparisons would certainly be consistent with his denying the existence of the Form of the Good. So, when asking whether Aristotle in fact embraces this inconsistent triad, one must bear in mind these sorts of qualifications from the outset.

Further, in general, if we are to arrive at a fair judgement about Aristotle's attraction to these three theses, some greater precision about their individual commitments is apposite. First, 'commensurability' is used in a variety of non-equivalent ways in rational choice theory. Properly speaking, we say that x and y are commensurable only if there is a common cardinal measure by which we may rank x and y. Even so, the term is often enough used in a more relaxed sense, such that commensurability means simply 'ordinally rankable'. (A series may be ordinally rankable even in the absence of a common cardinal measure—the 10 fastest marathoners may be such that the first is 17 seconds faster than the second, while the second is two minutes faster than the third, the first four seconds faster than the fourth, and so on.)[6] 'Commensurable' is used here in the more relaxed sense of being ordinally rankable—without the additional assumption that the ranking admits of a common cardinal measure.[7] This is all that is required, at least initially, to pose the question about Aristotle's rejection of Platonic univocity.[8]

[6] There is a further terminological issue in rational choice theory, as between the phrases 'commensurable' and 'comparable'. Some, including Raz (1986) and Anderson (1997), use these terms interchangeably. Others, like Stocker (1990) and Chang (1997), prefer this stricter (and more appropriate, given its provenance) use of the term. So, Chang (2015, 205): 'Two items are incommensurable just in case they cannot be put on the same scale of units of value, that is, there is no cardinal unit of measure that can represent the value of both items'. On this stricter use, incommensurability plainly does not entail incomparability.

[7] Some, including Chang (1997) prefer 'comparable' over 'commensurable' for this reason. That is understandable in one way, but I have avoided 'comparable' because everything is comparable to everything else along some dimension. Generally speaking, cheese is more expensive than chalk. It tastes better as well.

[8] A more fine-grained distinction may also be drawn, as between *strong* and *weak commensurability*. Weak commensurability asserts ordinality between any two domain-specific values, whereas strong commensurability requires a single measure for ordering all values, across all domains.

Further, let us collapse value-bearers and values, by speaking of value-bearers only in terms of values borne. Let us further say that values v^1 and v^2 are commensurable (in our sense) only if there is a bridge value, v^3, in terms of which v^1 and v^2 can be compared as valuable. So, for instance, one may say that *political liberty* and *economic security* are commensurable, because both are autonomy-enhancing.[9] By contrast, one might call the performance of a Schubert Impromptu *elegant*; and one might call a house built on a coast prone to hurricanes *sturdy*. These are both valuable features in their respective domains, but one should at least wonder whether there is a ready sense in which it is better to be elegant than sturdy. If, however, goodness is perfectly univocal, as Plato thinks, then it should be possible in principle to rank these values, even if circumscribed to their domains. That is, we should in principle be able to say whether the elegance of a Schubert Impromptu is better than the sturdiness of a house built in a challenging environment. Here we might well be given pause: is elegance in Δ_1 better than sturdiness in Δ_2? This is difficult to say; and still more difficult is it to say whether elegance as such is better than sturdiness as such.[10] Yet in terms of Plato's propinquity metric, the better is the one nearer to the Form of the Good.[11]

With that much in place, we can turn to the question of whether Aristotle states or implies each of our three theses in turn. We find that he does, at least prima facie. Even if that is so, however, it does not follow that this is his final and considered judgement. We therefore need to consider challenges to this way of understanding him.

Value Multivocity: The first thesis is plainly endorsed by Aristotle. He says that goodness is not 'something common, universal, and one' (*κοινόν τι καθόλου καὶ ἕν*, *EN* i 6, 1096a28). We should note, however, that there are various ways of denying the univocity of goodness, some quite mild and others more extreme. The most modest way of doing so would be simply to deny the existence of the Form of the Good, conceived as a single univocal good against which all good things are measured. This is in effect, however, nothing more than a denial of an ultimate bridge principle, in terms of which all values can, ultimately, be commensurated. So modest a denial leaves room for a great deal of domain-specific commensurability. Let us, then, term this a principle of *minimal value multivocity*:

Aristotle does not distinguish strong from weak commensurability, at least not expressly, but seems to accept strong commensurability in cases where he accepts commensurability at all.

[9] Again, however, this too is a domain-specific ranking. Political liberty may be better than economic security in terms of its being more autonomy-enhancing, yet worse in terms of its reducing world hunger. (So, e.g., Kurt Weill: 'Until you feed us, right and wrong can wait'.)

[10] We should not infer from its difficulty that it is manifestly impossible. This is after all the general tenor of much of the critical reception of New Brutalist architecture. See, e.g., Dalrymple (2010). It is, of course, a separate question whether such comparisons are defensible.

[11] This is putting matters unsubtly for clarity. Plato can of course add ceteris paribus clauses, admit of context-sensitivity and organicism, and also allow judgements to reflect a consideration of all relevant factors. That is to say, then, that it is not a consequence of Platonic univocity that one could simply rank the virtues atomistically on a scale. See Oddie (2001) on axiological atomism and additivity.

- Minimal Value Multivocity: There is no ultimate value property such as the Form of the Good in terms of which all subordinate values can be commensurated.

Aristotle evidently accepts minimal value incommensurability. Yet it is important to note that his doing so is consistent with his holding to commensurability in this or that domain, where domains may be variously specified.[12] In general, minimal value incommensurability is consistent with local commensurability relative to a given circumscribed good. For instance, consistent with his endorsement of minimal value incommensurability, Aristotle could maintain that the predicate '…good for human beings' is perfectly univocal, such that everything good in that domain could be ranked against every other good in that domain.

Minimal value multivocity would also be consistent with Aristotle's categorial argument against transcategorial predications of goodness, since as far as that argument is concerned, goods within any given category of being could be ordinally ranked. So, for instance, Aristotle could hold that it is better to be god than to be a human being, and better to be a human being than to be a fish.[13]

That acknowledged, it is equally true that at least one other Aristotelian argument is inconsistent with even this much value commensurability. Consider, for instance, the response given by Aristotle in conjunction with his reaction to the Platonic riposte regarding intrinsic goods. Recall that in that connection, Aristotle has evidently committed himself to an extreme form of intra-categorial non-univocity, holding that different intrinsic goods differ in so far as they are good, so that the predicate '…is good', even as it attaches to knowledge and various other intrinsic goods circumscribed to human beings varies: 'the accounts of goodness as it pertains to honour, intelligence, and pleasure are different and divergent (ἕτεροι καὶ διαφέροντες), precisely in the way in which they are good' (*EN* i 6, 1096b22–24).[14] On the assumption that this observation generalizes to all intrinsic goods, then Aristotle embraces an extreme form of value multivocity:

- Extreme Value Multivocity: for any two intrinsic goods g^1 and g^2, the predicate '…is good' applies non-univocally to g^1 and g^2.

Needless to say, if he endorses this extreme form of value multivocity, then if he also accepts the thesis VC, the thesis for any value property φ, x and y are

[12] It is also consistent with the thought, explored in the next chapter, that even if not all values are *directly* commensurable in terms a single standard, meaningful comparisons may yet be made between them by having them be suitably *grounded* in an overarching teleological structure.

[13] This argument has been explored in depth in chapter 4.

[14] This argument was considered in detail in chapter 7.

commensurable as φ only if *x* and *y* are univocally φ, Aristotle will have a difficult time making any direct value rankings at all.[15]

Of course, there is a variety of intermediary, moderate positions between minimal and extreme-value multivocity. One question will concern whether Aristotle has any mechanism for endorsing Minimal Value Multivocity, as he clearly does, without sliding into a form of Extreme Value Multivocity.

Value Commensurability (VC): Next we consider whether there are compelling reasons for understanding Aristotle to embrace the thesis that for any value property φ, *x* and *y* are commensurable as φ only if *x* and *y* are univocally φ.[16] If he does, as we have already seen, on the assumption of Extreme Value Multivocity, it will be difficult for Aristotle to make any direct value rankings at all; for in the absence of univocity, given (VC) he will have no space to rank them. Even so, there is some reason for supposing that Aristotle does indeed accept (VC). First, even within *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, Aristotle voices an understandable concern regarding the consequences of his commitment to value non-univocity. He at least poses the question, after voicing what seems an extreme form of value incommensurability: 'But how, then, is goodness spoken of?' (*ἀλλὰ πῶς δὴ λέγεται*; *EN* i 6, 1096b26). This is a question he should pose, given his awareness of the relation between commensurability and synonymy in the *Topics* i 15:

> Further, we should observe at the same time whether terms are meant so as to admit of a more <or less> or so as to be used similarly, for instance in the cases of *loud* voices and *loud* garments,[17] or *sharp* flavours and *sharp* sounds. For neither of these is meant to be loud or sharp in the same way and neither admits of a more <or less>. Accordingly, *loud* and *sharp* are homonymous. And neither admits of a more [or less]. For *all* synonyms are commensurable (*συμβλητόν*), since they will be meant so as to admit of a more or less or will be used similarly (*Top*. i 15, 107b13–17).

Since all synonyms are commensurable, and in the context being homonymous is introduced as being sufficient for both non-synonymy and non-commensurability, two predicates will be commensurable if and only if they are synonymous (cf. *Met*. 1055a6–7; *Pol*. 1284a6).

[15] This is not to say he could make no rankings of any kind. Though he could not say, e.g., that being rational is better than being courageous, he could say that being more courageous is better than being less so.

[16] In thinking about this topic I have benefited from studying two unpublished manuscripts kindly sent me by their authors, each superb, and each arriving at different destinations from mine, namely Kranzelbinder (unpublished), 'Aristotle's Good Analogy,' and Hildebrand (forthcoming), 'Cross-sense Comparisons in Aristotle: Theory and Praxis in Homonymous Predicates.'

[17] Aristotle's illustration is difficult to capture in directly parallel English. He is speaking of the homonymy of *λευκός*, which, as applied to voices, means *clear* or *distinct*, whereas applied to garments it means *bright* or *white*.

Aristotle reinforces this point in the *Physics*:

> Whatever is not synonymous is, in every instance, incommensurable (ἀλλ' ὅσα μὴ συνώνυμα, πάντ' ἀσύμβλητα).[18] For example, why is it that no pen, wine, or musical scale is *sharper* than any one of the others? It is because whatever is homonymous is incommensurable (ὅτι ὁμώνυμα, οὐ συμβλητά) (*Phys.* vii 4, 248b6–9).

Taking these observations all together then, Aristotle introduces synonymy as a condition of commensurability (COM):

- COM: The predicate φ as it occurs in '*a* is φ' and '*b* is φ' is commensurable in terms of φ-ness if, and only if, φ is synonymous in these applications.[19]

Since (COM) entails (VC) as a special case, we may conclude that prima facie at least, Aristotle holds that for any value property φ, *x* and *y* are commensurable as φ only if *x* and *y* are univocally φ.

[18] The translation here accepts Ross's construction of the text: ἀλλ' ὅσα μὴ συνώνυμα, πάντ' ἀσύμβλητα, also adopted by Wardy (1990, 276), who also suggests that this passage offers 'Aristotle's thorny, inconclusive, and obscure musings on comparability' (1990, 291). Ross comments (1936, 678): 'I have printed the reading which fits the context best and accounts best for the variants.' His first point, about context, is apt. In this passage Aristotle is considering the question 'whether every motion is commensurable with every other motion, or not' (*Phys.* vii 4, 248a10–11). In the immediate context, Aristotle notes that straight lines and circles are not commensurable, and wonders whether, then, we may say, if we must, that motions traversing straight lines and circles are commensurable in respect of their moving an equal distance in an equal time at an equal speed. He then veers into a somewhat jagged discussion of commensurability. Ross (1936, 677) fairly observes: 'This is a particularly difficult chapter. The text is somewhat corrupt; the expression is terser than usual. The discussion is highly aporematic; suggestions and objections follow each other with great rapidity, and the lines of thought are unusually difficult to follow.') In this context, it does indeed make sense for him to introduce the thought that whatever is non-synonymously φ is also incommensurable in respect of being φ, a point he then illustrates aptly with 'discrete homonyms' (on which see Shields (1999, chapter 2). So the sentence fits the context. Ross's second point, about the range of textual variants, is less clear. As Moraux (1967, 25) notes, the readings in E are throughout this section unreliable, which might have prompted a correction of the form Ross prints, and this is in fact also a copyist's or scholiast's correction to E, a ms. of the tenth century, also according to Moraux, made on the basis of consultation with other manuscripts. This reading was also known to Simplicius (*in Phys.* i 1086, 25), who, though, has in his lemma ὅσα μὴ ὁμώνυμα, ἅπαντα συμβλητά ('whatever things are not homonymous are all commensurable'; *in Phys.* i 1085, 15). He later offers Aristotle the biconditional that *x* is not homonymous if and only if *x* is commensurable: τὰ μὲν μὴ ὁμώνυμα συμβλητά ἐστι, τὰ δὲ ὁμώνυμα οὐ συμβλητά ('things which are not homonymous are not commensurable, but things that are homonymous are not commensurable'; *in Phys.* i, 1086, 28–29). Altogether, then, the mss. provide mixed support for any given variant, thus recommending Ross's argument from context as our best basis for conjecture. See also Comay del Junco (2022, 108–110) for an informed overview of the text. His discussion is complicated by his contention that homonymy and synonymy are not exhaustive, but notes that if the distinction is (as in Shields (2012)) in fact exhaustive, then 'the two versions may just reelect a distinction without a difference: in the final line of both versions, Aristotle writes that homonymy is sufficient for incomparability' (110).

[19] I say 'commensurable in terms of φ-ness' since two things might be non-synonymously φ while being commensurably ψ. For example, perhaps no pen is sharper than any wine, though the wine is heavier than the pen. Here one must bear in mind that judgements of synonymy and homonymy are always predicate-relative. See Shields (1999, 11, 14, and 126).

Commensurability of the Good: That leaves only the third of our inconsistent triad, good things are commensurable as good. The first and crucial observation here is that this thesis, as written, is plainly ambiguous, indeed, intentionally so. It too admits of a local and a global formulation:

Local Commensurability: For any domain Δ, if *a* and *b* in Δ are good, then *a* and *b* are commensurable as good.

This is just to say that within a given domain, it will always be the case, if *a* and *b* are good, that either *a* is better than *b*, *b* is better than *a*, or *a* and *b* are equally good. This is a very mild thesis, and relative to some domains there can be little doubt that Aristotle accepts it for at least some domains. That is a far cry, however, from a global formulation, which Aristotle must resist:

Global Commensurability: for any two good things *a* and *b*, *a* and *b* are commensurable as good.

Global commensurability is as extreme as local commensurability is mild. It holds that *any* two good things, in any domains whatsoever, are commensurable as good. This implies, for instance, that if a rendition of an aria by a mezzo-soprano is good, and a gesture of kindness by a poor person to a rich person is good, then the gesture is either better, worse, or as good as the rendition. This may strain credulity, but here too one can at least bear in mind that Platonic paradeigmatism offers a propinquity metric and that there being an axiological fact of the matter does not by itself entail that just anyone—or indeed anyone at all—is equipped to discern the ranking.

Aristotle nowhere directly asserts that all good things are commensurable as good things. Even so, he makes two sorts of judgements which call his consistency on this score into question. First, even within circumscribed goods that appear to rely on non-univocal value predicates, he seems to offer express rankings. Second, more globally, Aristotle seems willing first to speak of comparisons of good things as always made relative to a single standard (*ὅρος*), in a way that is almost reminiscent of Platonic paradeigmatism.

The first sort of case is relatively simple and common. In ranking *eudaimonia* as more choiceworthy than pleasure or honour, Aristotle observes:

> *Eudaimonia* seems to be most of all this sort of thing; for we always choose it because of itself and never because of another, whereas while we choose honour, pleasure, reason, and every virtue because of themselves (for if nothing resulted from them we would still choose each of them), we also choose them for the sake of *eudaimonia*, supposing that through them we shall have *eudaimonia*. But no one chooses *eudaimonia* for the sake of these, nor generally for anything other than itself. The same result appears from

> <the standpoint> of self-sufficiency as well, for the complete good seems to be self-sufficient (*EN* i 7, 1097a34–b8).

In making happiness more choiceworthy than any other intrinsic good, Aristotle judges it to be better, because more complete and more self-sufficient.

It will be observed, correctly, that this sort of comparison falls easily within the domain of one sort of circumscribed good, namely the good for human beings. That is correct, of course; but it only postpones our question, since it grounds what is better for human beings in something's being more complete (*τέλειον*) and more self-sufficient. There are more restricted principles perhaps available, but so far, at least, Aristotle seems to be suggesting that if *a* is more complete than *b*, *a* is more choiceworthy than *b*, which in turn is to imply that *a* is better than *b*.

Naturally enough, some will respond on his behalf that Aristotle need not appeal to any such general principle. He need only say, to make the domain-specific comparisons he makes here, that if *a* is more complete (*τέλειον*) for *φ*-things than *b*, *a* is more choiceworthy for *φ*-things than *b*, which in turn is to imply that *a* is better than *b*, again, for *φ*-things. We will return to this question, but note now in passing that it would be odd, and strained, to iterate such judgements without coordinating them in any way. To say that *a* is more complete (*τέλειον*) for *φ*-things than *b* is, and that *a* is more choiceworthy for *φ*-things than *b*, which in turn implies that *a* is better than *b*, again, for *φ*-things, *and* that *a* is a more complete (*τέλειον*) for *ψ*-things than *b*, that *a* is more choiceworthy for *ψ*-things than *b* is, which in turn implies that *a* is better than *b*, again, for *ψ*-things, and so on for every sortal '…*φ**', without asking whether the general comparative '…is more complete (*τέλειον*) than…' is itself to be held to be univocal or multivocal. If univocal, then we seem again merely to have postponed the argument; if multivocal, then this contention too will require an argument.[20]

These sorts of concerns are especially to the point, since Aristotle himself seems to embrace a kind of trickle-down theory of teleological goodness at least in some areas. So, for instance:

> Since every organ is for the sake of something, and each of the parts of the body is for the sake of something, and that which they are for the sake of is some action, it is clear that the body taken as a whole is for the sake of complex action. For the sawing did not come to be for the sake of the saw but rather the saw for the sake of sawing, for sawing is a sort of activity (*χρῆσις*). Accordingly, the body too is somehow for the sake of the soul, and its parts for the functions to which each is naturally related (*Part. An.* i 5, 645b15–20; cf. *Part. An.* i 1, 642a12–4; *Gen. An.* i 2 716a23–5; *EE* vii 10 1242a13–17).

[20] We take up these sorts of questions in § 9.2.

Nothing about the good is mentioned directly in this passage. Yet, in general, when we say that some action *a* is for the sake of some end e^1, and e^1 is for the sake of e^2, and e^2 for the sake of e^3, and so on until we reach some final end e^n, we say that *a* is for the sake of e^n. Thus, if deliberating about diet is for the sake of eating healthily, and eating healthily is for the sake of being healthy, and being healthy is for the sake of human flourishing, then deliberating about diet is for the sake of human flourishing.[21]

If we also think, as most do,[22] that among natural substances with a good, the end for kind *K* is the good for members of *K,* then we also have reason to think that the transitivity of ends marches in step with a concomitant transitivity of goods. This sort of connection is made clearer in the *Eudemian Ethics* vii 9, in a discussion of equality and partnership (*κοινωνία*):

> But since the case is similar in the relation the soul bears to the body and the craftsman to a tool, and the master to a slave, between each of these pairs there is no partnership; for they are not two, but <the first of these> is one and the other is for the sake of that one. Nor is the good to be distinguished in each of the two, but the good of both is the good of the one for whose sake the other exists (*EE* vii 9 1241b17–22).

Here Aristotle makes clear that the good of a teleologically subordinate part is parasitic on the good whose interest it serves. Applying this to the case of deliberating about diet: since human flourishing is good, health is good as contributing to flourishing, and eating healthily is good as contributing to health, with the result that, finally, deliberating about diet is good as contributing to eating healthily. This chain is an instance of a local trickle: one can find the goods of various actions in the human sphere as deriving from ends beyond themselves, ultimately from some final good for human beings, which is good in its own right.

To be clear, even if we accept such as instances of local trickle-down goods, it does not follow that *all* goods trickle down in this way; and it is especially not clear that all goods trickle down from some one common, final good.[23] In the first

[21] So far, then, even those who suppose that teleology is always circumscribed to a certain biological kind, such as Gotthelf (1987) and Nussbaum (1978, 59–106), can endorse this claim. There might after all be a plurality of local ends, each of which is ordered in this fashion.

[22] One noteworthy exception is Gotthelf (1987). For contrast, see Owens (1951), Rist (1965), Cooper (1982), and Sedley (1991).

[23] Bodnár (2005) discusses ways in which the goods of entities in one domain might be thought to provide a basis for goods in another. He finds occasion to criticize Sedley (2000) and Matthen (2001) for maintaining that the goods of individual kinds which are derived from the goods of others, or from the entire cosmos, are so derived on the basis of some principle of holism, to the effect that the general, independent nature of the cosmos provides goods to its parts by ordering them. Bodnár (2005, 25), rightly stressing a distinction between two notions of teleology in Aristotle (roughly the end *cuius* and the end *cui*), concludes: '… the behaviour of the subservient entities need not be in any substantive sense directed, by their own nature, independent of the operation of the beneficiary, at the

place, even if we endorse such local trickle-down goods, there could be a plurality of final goods, one for each kind. More importantly, even if we were to think that all natural kinds *K* had exactly one final good from which all subordinate goods derived their goodness, it would not follow that the goods of the various kinds derived their goodness from any further good. Local trickle-down, even of a broad and encompassing sort, does not imply global trickle-down, that is, the thesis, certainly congenial to Plato, that all good things ultimately derive their goodness from some one final good, the Form of the Good.

Even so, some things Aristotle says strongly suggest that he has a similar sort of approach, though obviously not one featuring the Form of the Good at its core. These things are, in fact, so strongly suggestive that one eminent scholar is able to say, without a hint of any misgiving, 'After all, if there is one thing that we know for certain about Aristotle, it is that he believes in a cosmic hierarchy in which god, not man, is the best being'.[24] Talk of a cosmic hierarchy with god at its apex is strongly suggestive of a global teleologically centred trickle-down theory of goodness. So suggestive is it that in his commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aquinas takes it as more or less uncontroversial that Aristotle accepts the existence of a single good from which all other goods derive. After pointing out that Aristotle's primary target in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 is not separation but unity,[25] Aquinas contends:

> Therefore, he affirms that the good is predicated of many things not as with many things with different meanings, as happens in those cases which are equivocal, insofar as all good things depend on a single, primary source (*principium*) of goodness, that is, as they are ordered to one end. For Aristotle did not intend the separate good be the idea or *ratio* of all goods things, but their source and end (*principium et finis*). Good things are called good according to analogy, that is an analogy of proportionality (*Sent. lib. eth.* I, l. vii, 96).[26]

Here Aquinas is prepared to deny that there is a single *ratio* (account, here = λόγος) of goodness, even while affirming that all good things have a single source

benefit of the entity which uses these subservient entities to its own advantage. They can follow the patterns of behaviour arising out of their own nature, all they need to do is pursue their very own ends'. More generally, one need not suppose that Aristotle must believe that the end of an entity, if derivative from its relation to another, cannot be good for the entity itself. The derivation itself might be holistic or it might be direct and unmediated: in either case, the derivation may be a benefit to the entity whose end it is, whether or not its actualization also serves to benefit another.

[24] Sedley (1991, 147). [25] See § 2.3.2 for a discussion of Aquinas's commentary.

[26] *Sic ergo dicit, quod bonum dicitur de multis, non secundum rationes penitus differentes, sicut accidit in his quae sunt casu aequivoca, sed in quantum omnia bona dependent ab uno primo bonitatis principio, vel inquantum ordinantur ad unum finem. Non enim voluit Aristoteles quod illud bonum separatum sit idea et ratio omnium bonorum, sed principium et finis. Vel etiam dicuntur omnia bona magis secundum analogiam,* id *est proportionem eandem* (*Sent. lib. eth.* I, l. vii, 96).

of their goodness, which is their ultimate end. So, he thinks that goodness trickles down, but non-univocally. Evidently if money trickles down, it remains always the same, money, and it remains always commensurable, where, typically, the money at the top is *more than* the money at the bottom. Goodness, Aquinas implies, is not like that; it splinters and alters as it moves in its variously descending rivulets.

Aquinas might be right about this sort of global trickle-down, but much more would need to be said in order to vouchsafe his contention.[27] For now we may merely note that he is rightly interested in finding some systematic way of bringing Aristotle's various judgements about goodness into some manner of commensuration. If we think that the polis of our prayers is better than other forms of political arrangements, that polity is better than democracy, but democracy is better than tyranny, that the best constitution will be the one under which all citizens possess moral virtue and the ability to enact the virtue they possess and thus attain a life of complete happiness (*Pol.* iv 1, 1288b21–35, vii 13, 1332a32–38), then we think that some political arrangements are better than others, and we will think this because we suppose that some lives are more desirable than others. If we think that some forms of life are more desirable than others, that the life of virtue is preferable to the life of dissolute pleasure, or that the life of reason, both practical and theoretical, is better than the life of bovine cud chewing, if, in general, we think that *eudaimonia* is the 'most choiceworthy of all goods' (*πάντων αἱρετρωτάτην* ⟨viz. *ἀγαθῶν*⟩; *EN* i 7, 1097b16; cf. *EN* i 5, 1095b17–23, *DA* ii 3, 414b1–6), then we think that some forms of life are better than others. Finally, if we think that choice in action requires deliberation, then once again we seem in even these quotidian ways committed to commensurating competing goods: 'whether one is to do this or that is already the work of reasoning—and it is necessary that measuring take place by one measure; for one pursues the best' (*πότερον γὰρ πράξει τόδε ἢ τόδε, λογισμοῦ ἤδη ἐστὶν ἔργον· καὶ ἀνάγκη ἑνὶ μετρεῖν· τὸ μεῖζον γὰρ διώκει* (*DA* iii 11, 434a7–9). In all these ways, great and small, Aristotle rightly embraces some version, or versions, of the Commensurability of the Good, the thesis that good things are commensurable as good.

We have found, then, that Aristotle finds attractive three theses—Value Multivocity, Value Commensurability, and the Commensurability of the Good—which, taken unqualifiedly, yield a difficulty for him. If good things are multivocal and commensurability requires univocity, then good things are not commensurable. Yet good things are commensurable, both locally and more globally. Even though we have not been given reason to believe that every good is commensurable with every other good, a thesis of universal commensurability, we have found

[27] We say a bit more about it in § 9.4.

Aristotle offering broad-based, cross-domain comparisons of relative goodness. Yet we have also found him maintaining a remarkably fine-grained form of non-univocity, insisting that various intrinsic goods which he definitely brings into commensuration, though good, differ and diverge precisely in so far as they are good (*EN* i 6, 1096b22–24).[28]

To be clear, the point of sketching his attraction to this trio of theses has not been to catch Aristotle out by exposing a contradiction in his axiology. It has rather been to hold him to account for his anti-Platonism, scrutinizing his own commitments by following his own edict that 'though we love them both, piety bids us to honour the truth before our friends' (*EN* i 6 1096a16–17). If it is not exactly an exercise in piety, this investigation means to join Aristotle in aiming at the truth.

The end result here is that Aristotle needs to explain how, having rejected Plato's axiology, he can deploy a replacement axiology up to the task of making the normative judgements he wishes to make. In service of this sort of question, our *prima facie* inconsistent triad is merely a heuristic for coming to appreciate how he might best proceed in the value world he prefers to Plato's.

9.2 Two Ways Out

In this respect, it is important to be clear that we are not asking anything of Aristotle which he does not already ask of himself. To appreciate this, one can contrast his axiological attitude with another sort of response to our prima facie inconsistent triad, one which takes the direct and unapologetic way out of simply denying the commensurability of goodness. One thought would be that we as a matter of fact live in a value-pluralist world: there are various goods and we cannot choose amongst them on any rational basis. Since justified rational choice requires a covering value between discrete values and there are no covering values, when we are asked to make a justified rational choice between incommensurable goods, we cannot.[29] Instead, we merely make an existential

[28] See § 5.4 for a discussion of Aristotle's contention that even intrinsic goods within a single category of being are non-univocally good.

[29] Some doubt that commensuration is required for rational choice. So, e.g. Anderson (1997) and Griffin (1997) in different ways suggest that choice between incommensurables may yet be rational; rational norms on this way of thinking do not require ordinality for rational adjudication. Others, including Stoker (1997), think that commensuration plays no role in choice: one simply does what one deems good; Raz (1997) and, in a different way, Finnis (1997) contend that reason sets a bar of eligibility but then gives out, making room for naked expressions of will or the sway of (non-rational?) feelings. Aristotle seems not to be among their number: 'whether one is to do this or that is already the work of reasoning—and it is necessary that measuring take place by one measure; for one pursues the best' (*DA* iii 11, 434a7–9; cf. *EN* 111b26, 113a15; 1139a11; vi 9).

lunge.[30] Should we choose to live as an artist, maximizing beauty, or as a jurist, maximizing justice? We cannot do both; that would simply be impractical in a single life. Yet we are the sorts who want to maximize the overall value of the world. If justice and beauty are discrete values, and there is no covering value φ, such that this much justice is more φ than that much beauty, then we have open to us only to lurch towards one life or the other; we should not pretend that we are making a deliberation-delivered decision countenanced by rationality, one directing us to select this life over that as the most value-rich alternative available to us.

Aristotle gives us no indication that he understands himself to live in a universe of plural values of this sort. Despite his protracted assault on Plato's univocity assumption, to his credit, he shows some discomfort about the consequences of his anti-Platonism. Recall that in the midst of his rejection of Platonic univocity, he pauses to ask himself a perfectly apposite question:[31]

> But how, then, is goodness spoken of? For it does not seem akin to those things which are homonymous by chance. Is it, then, spoken of [like those instances of homonymy] where all things derive from one thing or contribute to one thing? Or is it rather spoken of by analogy? For as sight is to body, so reason is in the soul, and, in general, as one thing is in another so a different thing is in yet another (*EN* i 6, 1096b26–29).

The question now takes on a kind of urgency, because it shows that Aristotle is keen to entertain alternatives which fall well short of simply embracing value pluralism with its presumptive consequence that rational deliberation about competing courses of action is in many cases simply not on offer.

That he so much as raises this sort of question already shows that Aristotle is concerned about the ways in which his anti-Platonic polemic may come back to haunt him. Plato has an easy way out of our inconsistent triad: he loudly denies the multivocity of value. That route is closed to Aristotle. It remains for him, then, either (i) to deny one of the remaining two propositions, namely Value

[30] Although she does not endorse this way of thinking, Chang (1997, 9) gives it a good expression: 'Call comparativism the view that all choice situations are comparative. Even if a choice situation changes because there is a shift in choice value, the new choice situation will require the comparability of the alternatives with respect to the new choice value. There is, according to comparativism, no avoiding the comparability of alternatives with respect to the choice value if there is to be justified choice. Thus, if comparativism is correct, the significance of incomparability among alternatives is very great indeed. For if alternatives are incomparable, justified choice is precluded, and the role of practical reason in guiding choice is thereby restricted'. Similarly, Chang (1997, 14): 'If two alternatives are incomparable with respect to an appropriate covering value, justified choice between them is precluded'. For doubts about this line of reasoning, see Stoker (1997), Griffin (1997) and Anderson (1997).

[31] On Aristotle's concern, see § 7.3.

Commensurability or the Commensurability of the Good, perhaps by restricting one or the other in such a way as to render the inconsistency moot; or (ii) to show how the prima facie inconsistency never was a bona fide inconsistency in the first place.

He considers two possible ways forward: analogy and some notion of core-dependent homonymy. Within *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 he already gives very brief illustrations of how these two approaches might be developed (*EN* 1097b25; on homonymy, cf. *Met*. 1003a27, *EE* 1236a14, b20; on analogy see, *Phys*. 191a8, *Met*. 1048a37).

That the homonymy he envisages is not mere equivocity is clear: he dismisses directly the thought that the kind of homonymy in view is the kind where things are homonymous merely by chance alone (*ἀπὸ τύχης*). He is here setting aside the thought that, for instance, the predications '… is good' in these three sentences:

- God is good.
- Virtue is good.
- Xanthippe's health is good.

might as well be regarded in the way that we regard the predications of 'suit' in:

- To redress these injuries, the barrister introduced a suit into court.
- He looked quite the dandy, wearing his florid new suit.
- The rules of bridge specify that players must follow suit if they can.

In the latter case, presumably the accounts of 'suit' each feature different lexical definitions. Aristotle's own example is '*kleis*', which means either 'door-key' or 'clavicle' (*EN* v i, 1129a30). This signals, then, that if homonymy is in view for goodness, it is not, in Aristotle's estimation, the kind of homonymy which results from inconsequential linguistic accidents. The predicate '…is good' in the first three sentences are meant to be connected.

He briefly mentions two possibilities, where the possibilities are meant to form an exclusive disjunction: analogy and homonymy, but not, then, chance homonymy.[32]

[32] That the alternatives are exclusive seems clear in the phrasing: 'or are they *rather* one by analogy? (*ἢ μᾶλλον κατ' ἀναλογίαν*; *EN* i 6, 1096b28). For this reason, we should reject the more inclusive suggestion of Mirus (2004, 534–535): 'In fact, it would seem that both homonymy *pros hen* and analogy are at work in the predication of "good"'. Same again for Menn (1992, 551, n. 11): 'It may be objected that *Nicomachean Ethics* 1096b27ff suggests that "good" is said by analogy, rather than *pros hen*. I think *both* must be true'. In any case, Aristotle leaves the alternatives he here puts on the table undeveloped; one needs to look beyond *EN* i 6 to see which, if either, he favours.

The first alternative is, then, analogy.[33] What would this consist in? Aristotle is careful in the way he refers to analogy, in several different passages.[34] For example, in discussing justice in distribution in *Nicomachean Ethics* v 3, he says:

[33] About this prospect Cherniss (1962, 362 n. 270) contends: 'Nevertheless he continues (1096B26–31) "good" is not an accidental homonym; and he asks whether it is applied in the various cases *τῷ ἀφ' ἑνὸς εἶναι ἢ πρὸς ἓν ἅπαντα συντελεῖν, ἢ μᾶλλον κατ' ἀναλογίαν* [by being from one thing or by all things contributing to one thing, or is it rather spoken of by analogy?]. The *μᾶλλον* [rather] and the explanatory sentence which follows (*ὡς γὰρ ἐν σώματι ὄψις, ἐν ψυχῇ νοῦς, καὶ ἄλλο δὴ ἐν ἄλλῳ*) [For as sight is to body, so reason is in the soul, and, in general, as one thing is in another so a different thing is in yet another] give the impression that at any rate here he inclines to analogy as the correct answer; but he says at once that an exact determination of this problem is more appropriate to "another philosophy", and this can be nothing but metaphysics'. The point about *μᾶλλον* [rather] and Aristotle's syntax is occasionally made, but it is not borne out by a perusal of parallels. Where 'A or rather B' (A *ἢ μᾶλλον* B) are offered as alternatives by Aristotle, we do sometimes find B as his own preferred choice: *DA* i 1 402a26, i 1 403b8; *DC* iii 8, 307b5; *Met*. K 7, 1064a30; *Pol*. ii 3, 1262a8, iii 15, 1286a40. Nearly as often, though, he prefers A: *Hist. An*. x 7, 638b2; *Part. An*. iii 1, 661a30, iv 8, 684a29; *Met*. K 7 1064a22; *Pol*. vvii 2 1324a5. In the majority of cases, though, he is either neutral or the matter is indeterminate (*neutral* in that he expresses neutrality or indeterminate in that it is unclear whether he means to express a preference: *APr* ii 24, 69a22, ii 24, 69a27; *DA* i 4, 408a20; *Hist. An*. iv 5, 531a2, xi 634a20; *PN* 442b13; *Top*. i 15, 107b17, vi 13, 150b6; *EN* i 12, 1101b11; *Met*. B 2, 998a22, I 2, 1053b13; *Pol*. vi 3, 1318a18, vii 5, 1339a21. That said, as Cherniss goes on to note, Aristotle treats being and good as exactly parallel here, and it is clear that in the other philosophy, metaphysics, and *Met*. *Γ* 4 in particular, the disjunction for being is resolved in the direction of A, that is, in the direction of core-dependent homonymy. Further, one may wonder whether Aristotle's syntax might be better represented as 'A or B or, rather, C.' This depends upon whether we treat *τῷ ἀφ' ἑνὸς εἶναι ἢ πρὸς ἓν ἅπαντα συντελεῖν* as a version of one alternative or two. Probably Robinson is right to approve of the view of Gauthier and Jolif (1958–1959), who treat them as one (1962, 430): '*τῷ ἀφ' ἑνὸς εἶναι ἢ πρὸς ἓν ἅπαντα συντελεῖν* are one type of equivocity, not two. *NE* denies that the word 'good' belongs to this type; but finally Aristotle came to think it did, in *Metaph*…' Same again Giocarnis (1964, 198): 'The homonymy of many goods cannot be founded on mere chance. Aristotle concludes that the correspondence with the many goods exhibit must be founded on one of two reasons: goods are denoted by the same name either because they derive from a single type of things or principle and contribute to a single purpose or end (*τῷ ἀφ' ἑνὸς εἶναι* ***καὶ*** *πρὸς ἓν*—[though NB that Aristotle's ms. reads: *τῷ ἀφ' ἑνὸς εἶναι* ***ἢ*** *πρὸς ἓν*, as does the lemma of Eustratius upon which Giocarnis is commenting]) or their homonymy is based upon analogy, a similarity or correspondence in some respect between things essentially dissimilar'.

[34] Here the thought bears reinforcing that analogy in Aristotle is not the notion later developed under that name to describe what he called homonymy, including core-dependent homonymy. Owens (1951, 59) puts that point well enough: '[t]he nature and functions of the two kinds of equivocals should not be confused. To call the *πρὸς ἓν* type "analogous" is not Aristotelian usage, though common in later Scholastic works'. See also Lonfat (2004, 106): 'la doctrine de l'*analogia entis* n'est pas une doctrine aristotélicienne, mais une invention médiévale, correspondant à diverses relectures des corpus aristotéliciens grecs et arabes, successivement apparus en traduction chez les latins'. There is, however, one important passage which raises a problem for this view, in that it seems to offer analogy as a type of homonymy with 'is near' (*ἐγγύς*) and so easily missed: 'This discussion signifies that the genus [of motion] is not some one thing, but that there are many things beyond this one escapes our notice, and there are among homonyms some which are distant from one another and others which have some similarities, and some which are near either in genus or by analogy; and this is the reason why they do not seem to be homonyms, though they are'. (*καὶ σημαίνει ὁ λόγος οὗτος ὅτι τὸ γένος οὐχ ἕν τι, ἀλλὰ παρὰ τοῦτο λανθάνει πολλά, εἰσίν τε τῶν ὁμωνυμιῶν αἱ μὲν πολὺ ἀπέχουσαι, αἱ δὲ ἔχουσαί τινα ὁμοιότητα, αἱ δ' ἐγγὺς ἢ γένει ἢ ἀναλογίᾳ, διὸ οὐ δοκοῦσιν ὁμωνυμίαι εἶναι οὖσαι*' (*Phys*. vii 4, 249a21–24). Here, however, he seems to be using the notion of homonymy in the broadest sense, to mean 'things with the same names' (cf. *Soph. El*. 4, 165b38; *Rhet*. iii 2, 1404b38).

> For analogy is equality of accounts (*λόγων*), and involves four terms at least (that discrete proportion involves four terms is plain…) (*ἡ γὰρ ἀναλογία ἰσότης ἐστὶ λόγων, καὶ ἐν τέτταρσιν ἐλαχίστοις*; *EN* v 3, 1131a31–32).

Here we have a four-term relation of the following form:

a : *b* : : *c* : *d*

This structure is confirmed, for instance, in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 (1096b28–30):

sight : body : : reason : soul

And also in *Posterior Analytics* ii 14 (*APo*. 98a20123):

spine : fish : : bone : terrestrial animal

In each of these cases we have, just as specified, four terms, where the terms lack a univocal definition.

We also have in these structures some relation *R* which grounds the analogy, such that: '*a* : *b* : : *c* : *d*' simply asserts the existence of a relation *R* such that *aRb* and *cRd*. To put the matter simply, for at least one transparent instance of this form:

pint : quart : : half kilometre : kilometre

The analogy obtains because there is a single *R* reflected in the two domains, one of liquid measure and one in the domain of distance measure, namely one-half. Generalizing, for every analogy of this form, the analogy obtains when and only when there is some dyadic relation *R* and the terms in question stand in *R* to one another.

If this is correct, however, then this first way out seems of little value. This is so for two reasons. First, assuming that there is some *R* specifiable in the analogies of goodness, we evidently have a recurrence of Platonic univocity, simply at a higher level.[35] So, suppose that we attempt to articulate the analogy in structural or functional terms.[36] One might say, for example, that it makes no ready sense to regard

[35] Robinson (1962, 466) pushes this point in a different context, in holding that analogy in any sense other than mathematical proportionality 'is merely the fact that some relations have more than one example'.

[36] This would be to follow the advice of Hesse (1965, 330), commenting on *Topics* i 8: 'When there is similarity in the relation of the parts to the whole in each species, for example cup is the symbol of Dionysus as shield is of Ares, and, more typically, hand and claw, scale and feather, wings and fins, and so on, have similar structural positions or functions in relation to their respective organisms'.

this virtuous woman as better than that sharp knife, even though they are both goods of their kind. Still, one might reasonably say that this particular knife, though sharp, is not as far along the scale of knife-ish goodness as that woman is along the scale of human goodness. She is very highly adept at rational contemplation, which provides a scale of human goodness (let us allow), while the knife is able to cut, but would benefit from being sharpened on a whetstone. So, she is, in this attenuated sense, better than it is. Yet this sort of comparison seems to smuggle in a perfectly univocal account of goodness, namely:

- *x* is good $=_{df}$ (i) *x* is a member of functional kind *K*; and (ii) *x* realizes the function of *K* to a high degree.

It is not clear, for instance, why Plato should be constrained to deny this. He does not tell us, but perhaps if pressed, this would be his account of goodness. If he responded in this way, his account would be univocal.[37]

Second, and more importantly, it seems difficult even to determine how to map the apparatus of analogy onto the situation with goodness. If it is not the purely functional structure just introduced, then it is unclear how one might proceed. Aristotle's own example in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 is this: 'as sight is to body, so reason is in the soul, and, in general, as one thing is in another so a different thing is in yet another' (1096b28–29). This seems to respect the standard schema:

sight : body : : reason : soul

or, again, more schematically:

a : b : : c : d

One can then readily imagine several possibilities for the relation binding the analogy together: as sight *is a faculty in* the body, so reason *is a faculty in* the soul; or as sight is the most important faculty in the body so reason is the most important faculty in the soul (cf. *Met*. A 1, 980a25–27); and so on.

Yet it is hard to see how we are meant to structure four terms from such predications of '…is good' in such diverse instances as:

- A cheese course after dinner in the French manner is good.
- In counterpoint constrained vertical contrast is good.
- When desperation threatens, a surfeit of optimism is good.

[37] For an account of the roles of similarity/sameness in analogy, see Rapp (1992, esp. 528–531).

It is hard to begin to fathom how the analogies are meant to be structured in four terms.[38]

Taking that all together, then: Aristotle is rightly concerned that predications of goodness, if non-univocal, should not therefore be regarded as mere chance homonyms. This concern speaks to his attitude regarding Value Commensurability, the claim that good things are commensurable as good things. For some range of predications of '. . . is good', Aristotle wants to hold out for commensurability in the absence of univocity. His suggestion that analogy might be the way forward seems none too promising.[39]

That leaves the remaining alternative, evidently a form of core-dependent homonymy. As we have noted already, this possibility is not developed in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, its consideration, along with that of analogy, being postponed as best taken up elsewhere, since 'speaking accurately concerning them belongs more appropriately to another [branch] of philosophy' (*EN* i 6, 1096b30–31).[40] Nor is the suggestion made at all in the parallel passage of *Eudemian Ethics* i 8. Later in that work, however, we do have a relevant discussion in connection with friendship (φιλία), where the language is similar and a contrast is made between speaking of the non-univocity of friendship, which Aristotle affirms, and the prospects of the applications of the term being homonymous by chance, which Aristotle denies, affirming that instead they are related to the primary instance of friendship as related to one thing '*pros hen*' (πρὸς ἕν), which is to say as a core-dependent homonym (*EE* vii 2, 1236b24–26).

Leading into that discussion, Aristotle says something similar regarding the multivocity of goodness:

> Since good is meant in many ways (for we say that one thing is good because it is of such a sort [i.e. in view of the kind of thing it is, or because of its nature], and another <is good> in virtue of its being beneficial and useful), and further the pleasant is in one way pleasant simpliciter and good simpliciter (ἁπλῶς), and in another way because of its being pleasant for someone and its appearing good, and just as where inanimate things are concerned it is possible for us to choose something and love it because of each of these reasons, so is it in the case of a human being: <for we choose and love one> in virtue of what sort of human he

[38] One might also observe here that Aristotle does not introduce analogy into the parallel passage in *Eudemian Ethics* i 8 at all. He uses the word only five times in that work, all in connection with friendship: *EE* 1238b31, 1240a13, 1241b33, b36, 1242a4.

[39] I have benefited in thinking about this issue from studying an unpublished paper, partly critical of my earlier work on this topic, 'Aristotle's Good Analogy', by Daniel Kranzelbinder. While I have not given way to his criticisms, he makes an excellent case to be answered.

[40] Speaking 'more accurately' (or 'more exactly'; ἐξακριβοῦν) concerning them is evidently meant in a technical sort of way. Cf. *EE* i 8, 1217b15–21, where it is equated with speaking 'logically' (λογικῶς), on which see Burnyeat (2001, 19–25).

> is and because of his virtue, and another because he is beneficial and useful, and another because he is pleasant and because of pleasure. Thus someone becomes a friend when, being loved, he returns love, and this <reciprocal affection> does not escape the notice of either.[41]

This is a very rich passage regarding Aristotle's approach to friendship, which seems subtle and sophisticated in the *Eudemian Ethics* in a way it is not in the *Nicomachean Ethics*,[42] but what is of special note for our purposes now concerns the parallel between friendship and goodness which Aristotle here forges: both are instances of core-dependent homonymy.

The beginning part of the passage gives us a clear expression of the grounds for thinking of the predicate '…is good' as non-univocal. Aristotle's illustration directly parallels his introduction of the core-dependent homonymy of being in *Metaphysics Γ* 4 (1003b6–10; cf. Met. 1017a8–b9, 1026a33–b2, 1028a10–31, 1051a340–b6). The idea in both passages is the same and can be illustrated in the current context by some straightforward examples. Consider:

- God is good.
- Exercise is good.
- A detailed map in a foreign city is always good.

The first illustrates Aristotle's thought that the predicate '…is good' applies to some subjects simply in virtue of the sort of thing they are, in virtue of their nature; in the second this same predicate applies because its subject is beneficial, which is to say that it is productive of the good; and in the third it applies to something which is useful, which is to say that it serves some good end.

We are meant to see three things straightaway in examples such as this. First, the predicate '…is good' means something different in each these applications, just as the paraphrases provided reveal. Second, we are nevertheless not in the zone of things which are multivocal by chance (*ἀπὸ τύχης*); the predicates are clearly related. Third, and perhaps less obviously, the relations borne are systematic: the latter two asymmetrically depend in account on the former. That is, any account of the predicate '…is good' in either of the second two instances will

[41] *ἐπεὶ οὖν τὰ ἀγαθὰ πλεοναχῶς* (*τὸ μὲν γὰρ τῷ τοιόνδ' εἶναι λέγομεν ἀγαθόν, τὸ δὲ τῷ ὠφέλιμον καὶ χρήσιμον*), *ἔτι δὲ τὸ ἡδὺ τὸ μὲν ἁπλῶς καὶ ἀγαθὸν ἁπλῶς, τὸ δὲ τινὶ καὶ φαινόμενον ἀγαθόν· ὥσπερ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀψύχων δι' ἕκαστον τούτων ἐνδέχεται ἡμᾶς αἱρεῖσθαί τι καὶ φιλεῖν, οὕτω καὶ ἄνθρωπον. τὸν μὲν γὰρ <τῷ> τοιόνδε καὶ δι' ἀρετήν, τὸν δ' ὅτι ὠφέλιμος καὶ χρήσιμος, τὸν δ' ὅτι ἡδὺς καὶ δι' ἡδονήν. φίλος δὴ γίνεται ὅταν φιλούμενος ἀντιφιλῇ, καὶ τοῦτο μὴ λανθάνῃ πως αὐτούς* (*EE* vii 2, 1236a7–15). The sentence is anacoluthic as it stands in the current text.

[42] For an elaboration, see Kenny (2018). His general conclusions are apt regarding the relative merits of the treatment of friendship; broader conclusions regarding the relationship between the *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian Ethics*, as he realizes, require a separate discussion.

ultimately refer to the account of the predicate given in an explication of the first, but not vice versa.[43]

Aristotle's purpose in introducing this structure into *Eudemian Ethics* vii 2 is not to give a disquisition on the good, but to show how core-dependent homonymy may be thought to apply to friendship, such that there is a primary kind (*πρῶτος*) of friendship in terms of which the remaining types, friendships of pleasure and utility, are defined.[44] Even so, in proceeding in this way, Aristotle shows how he regards the homonymy of the good: his treatment is a clear instance of his regarding it as a core-dependent homonym. He thus provides an answer to the disjunction set out in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, offering the good as homonymous not by chance but as deriving from a common source.

We expect, then, the good to adhere to the general framework for core-dependent homonymy:[45]

> *a* and *b* are homonymously *φ* in a core-dependent way *iff*: (i) *a* is *φ*; (ii) *b* is *φ*; (iii) the accounts of *φ*-ness in '*a* is *φ*' and '*b* is *φ*' do not completely overlap; and (iv) the account of *φ* in '*b* is *φ*' necessarily makes reference to the account of *φ* in '*a* is *φ*' in an asymmetrical way (or vice versa).

The notion of account-dependence here requires some explication. Aristotle's basic thought is that an account of the primary instance of being-*φ* must show up in the accounts of all non-primary occurrences. The 'must' here derives from the fact that in an essence-specifying definition, the *definiens* captures the nature of the *definiendum*; in treating the core instance as prior in this way, Aristotle introduces the thought that the primary instance is controlling (*κύριος*) as a source (*ἀρχή*) and cause (*αἴτιον*) of the non-core instances (*Met*. *Γ* 4, 1003b6; *Cat*. 14b12–13).

If this is correct, then we should expect Aristotle to address our prima facie inconsistent triad by denying Value Commensurability, the thesis that for any value property *φ*, *x* and *y* are commensurable as *φ* only if *x* and *y* are univocally *φ*. To do so, however, he owes an account of precisely how core-dependent homonymy allows one to make cross-domain comparisons. If medicine is good because it helps preserve the good of health and friends—true friends, friends in the primary way—are good because they promote virtue, then one may yet ask: which is better? Are friends or doses of medicine more choiceworthy?

[43] See Ward (1995) for a full and helpful exposition of the role of homonymy in Aristotle's treatment of friendship in *EE* vii 2.

[44] Thus he speaks of 'the true friend, and the friend *simpliciter* in the primary way, the sort chosen by himself because of himself' (*ὁ δ' ἀληθινὸς φίλος καὶ ἁπλῶς ὁ πρῶτος ἐστίν, ἔστι δὲ τοιοῦτος ὁ δι' αὑτὸν αὐτὸς αἱρετός*; *EE* vii 2, 1236b28–29).

[45] This framework agrees with the characterization developed and defended in Shields (1999), in which see especially § 2.6 and §§ 4.2–4.5.

Put thus abstractly, the question does not admit of a direct or easy answer. Even so, one can see the beginnings of an answer in the thought that each of the non-primary goods stands in some determinate relation to the primary good, in this case, let us say, the circumscribed good-for-human beings, and receives its goodness precisely in virtue of this relation. We may have, then, a *principle of degree of dependence*,[46] which is unlike Plato's propinquity metric, but which nevertheless provides a bridge value for comparison. What is better among the non-core instances is that which in the current circumstance most augments or enhances the primary or core good. Because the core instance is responsible for the goodness of the non-core instances, we are in a position to determine, reciprocally, indirectly, which best engages the good which is its cause.

This, however, requires taking seriously the thought that goodness, in its core manifestation, is the cause of the goodness of other good things. That sort of contention begins to sound vaguely Platonic: 'In the realm of what is known', says Plato, 'the Form of the Good is last and is hardly seen; but once it has been seen, it is necessary to conclude that it is in every way the cause of all that is right and fine' (*Republic* vi 517b7–c1).

9.3 Goodness as Cause: A Rapprochement

Even before he enters into the axiological chapter of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, Aristotle draws attention to some earlier ways of thinking about the good which he thinks relevant to his investigation:

> Among the wise, some used to think that beyond these many good things there is some other good, something good in its own right (τι καθ' αὑτὸ εἶναι), which is the cause (αἴτιον) of the goodness of all these good things (*EN* i 4, 1095a26–28).

Aristotle does not name Plato, though he has him in mind; he uses precisely the kind of language Plato was in the habit of using when characterizing the Form of the Good.[47] The purport of the suggestion seems to be that in so speaking, Plato was misguided, that there is nothing answering to the description the 'good in its own right' (τι καθ' αὑτὸ εἶναι) serving as a cause (αἴτιον) of the goodness of other good things.

[46] See § 10.5 for a formulation of this metric.

[47] See § 1.1.2–1.1.6 for some examples of this language. It is also noteworthy that in this passage Aristotle uses the imperfect tense (ᾤοντο), which is his tendency when describing his ongoing discussions with Plato, as opposed to the present tense when reporting something written by Plato or others. He uses the same imperfect tense a few lines further on, where he does mention Plato by name (*EN* i 5, 1095a32).

Yet Aristotle himself comes around to speaking of *eudaimonia* as a cause of good things:

> To us it is clear from what has been said that *eudaimonia* is among the things that are honourable and complete. It also seems this way because of its being a source (or principle, *ἀρχή*); for it is on account of this [source (or principle, *ἀρχή*)] that we do all the other things that we do and we take the source and cause of good things to be something honourable and divine (*τίμιόν τι καὶ θεῖον*) (*EN* i 12, 1101b35–1102a4).

Aristotle does not contradict himself in making this sort of claim. The good he has in view in this context, *eudaimonia*, is clearly a circumscribed good, namely the good for human beings (cf. *EN* i 13, 1102a13–16). So, it is consistent with a denial of there being a good simpliciter, which is the cause of the goodness of all good things, that there be a circumscribed good, where that particular good$_i$ is the cause of the goodness of all good things in some domain or other. That is to say, for example, that Aristotle can consistently allow that there is a good$_i$, the good-for-humans, which is the cause of all things which are good for humans, even though there is no good simpliciter which is the cause of the goodness of this good$_i$, the good-for-humans.

Even so, the proposal that the predicate '…is good' is in effect a core-dependent homonym opens the door to a more encompassing conception of goodness as a cause,[48] one which does not run afoul of Aristotle's rejection of univocity even while moving in the direction of a more universal notion of goodness.

One can appreciate this possibility once one further feature of Aristotle's notion of core-dependent homonymy is borne in mind. This is that the notion of account dependence is itself elastic. When one account depends upon another, the dependence cannot be just of any form of necessity; for then even instances of '…is a bank' or '…is sharp' could be made to be core-dependent, merely by inserting some necessary relation or other between them. The asymmetric relations must be genuinely explanatory, which is to say that, in Aristotle's terms, the non-core instance of a predicate '…is φ' must stand in one of the four-causal dependency relations to the core.[49] The more accurate conception of core-dependent homonymy is thus:

[48] Here I find myself in partial agreement with Menn (1992: 550), who rightly stresses that goodness is a core-dependent homonym (a '*pros hen* equivocal' in his terminology), but leaves aside the question of its status as cause: 'Aristotle thinks that the existence of an Idea of the good is actually incompatible with the existence of a Good-itself, since there could be an Idea of the good only if it and all other goods were good univocally. If there is a Good-itself, goodness must be a *pros hen* equivocal. Because goodness is a *pros hen* equivocal, is it possible to answer the objection we made above, that "good" cannot name the divine essence, because many things besides God are also good? They are good, but not in the same sense that God is good. God is the only thing that is good in the sense of "good" in which God is good'.

[49] This was a point rightly emphasized in Cajetanus, *De Analogia Nominum*, developed and recast in Shields (1999, chapter 4 § 4).

> *a* and *b* are homonymously φ in a core-dependent way *iff*: (i) *a* is φ; (ii) *b* is φ; (iii) the accounts of φ-ness in '*a* is φ' and '*b* is φ' do not completely overlap;
>
> (iv) necessarily, if *a* is the core instance of φ-ness, then *b*'s being φ stands in one of the four-causal relations to *a*'s being φ; and (v) *a*'s being φ is asymmetrically responsible for *b*'s being φ.

With this fuller account of core-dependence available, we are in a position to see how Aristotle can regard goodness as a cause in a domain-independent way, even while he rejects Plato's univocity assumption.

The crucial causal connection upon which Aristotle insists is teleological. This can be shown in two very different ways. First, and less importantly, Aristotle allows for a kind of direct teleological cause as an object of love; second, and more importantly, Aristotle criticizes his predecessors for failing to appreciate the way in which goodness causes, and his criticisms reflect a view according to which goodness is present in what we will call a fine-grained intensional manner, which allows it to play precisely the role offered it in our fuller and more accurate account of core-dependent homonymy.

Let us take these in turn, the first only briefly.

Aristotle's readers divide on the question of whether the prime mover of *Metaphysics Λ* moves objects in the sublunar realm indirectly or directly as well.[50] On the indirect approach, the prime mover moves only the outer sphere of the heavens, which in turn moves the lesser spheres and on down (so, e.g. *Met. Λ* 8, 1073a33). The details of how this motion is effected are disputed, but for present purposes we can grant this form of indirect causation. More pertinent at present is the question of whether there is also a more direct form of motion, as a direct object of desire. Various passages suggest so. For instance, *De Anima* ii 4 contains the suggestion that all living beings desire to participate in immortality in a manner which befits their kind:

> For the most natural among the functions belonging to living things, at least those which are complete and neither deformed nor spontaneously generated, is this: to make another such as itself, an animal an animal and a plant a plant, so that it may, insofar as it is able, partake of the everlasting and the divine (*ἵνα τοῦ ἀεὶ καὶ τοῦ θείου μετέχωσιν ᾗ δύνανται*). For that is what everything desires, and for the sake of that everything does whatever it does in accordance with nature (*DA* ii 4, 415a26–b2).

The good desired here is the good of a final cause, as is more fully attested in *Metaphysics Λ* 9:

[50] Kahn (1985) reviews the controversy and sides, rightly, with those who recognize a direct form of causal activity.

> One must inquire into whether the nature of the universe as a whole contains the good, i.e. the highest good as something separate and by itself or as its order (*τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ ἄριστον, πότερον κεχωρισμένον τι καὶ αὐτὸ καθ' αὑτό, ἢ τὴν τάξιν*). Or in both ways, as in an army? For the excellent (*τὸ εὖ*) is found in the order and in the leader, and more so in the latter; for he is not <good> because of the order but rather the order <is good> because of him. And all things are ordered together somehow, not all in the same way—for instance, fishes and fowls and plants; and the world is not such that one thing has nothing to do with another, but there is some <order>. For all things order to one (*πρὸς ἕν*) (*Met. Λ* 9, 1075a11–19; cf. 1076a4).

In both these passages, Aristotle seems to speak of a more direct form of dependence on the prime mover, given in terms of the dependence of the order of the universe on the good of the prime mover and in terms of the desires and strivings of living beings in the sub-lunar realm (cf. *De Caelo* i 9, 279a22–30).[51]

These sorts of passages represent the universe as a whole as well-ordered, as featuring a highest good (*τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ ἄριστον*), as a universe whose order depends upon the goodness of its core final good, the one good towards which all things are ordered in their striving and desiring.

This good is an end, and is thus a teleological good. One can thus appreciate the role of goodness as cause by reflecting on the ways in which Aristotle is critical of those among his predecessors who failed to grasp the significance of final causation. Significantly, he rejects the views of not only those who fail to recognize it altogether but also those, like Anaximander, who, in his view, recognize it in the wrong sort of way.

To see this, one might wonder how goodness causes, either globally or even in a certain domain as circumscribed. One thought would be that something good causes by co-inciding with something which is an object of desire, such that:

- *x*'s being good is a cause of *y*'s being φ (or of S's doing α) only if (i) *x*, in addition to being good, is also ψ, and (ii) *x*'s being ψ suffices for *y*'s being φ (or of S's doing α).

In Aristotle's more precise idiom:

- *x*'s being good is a cause of *y*'s being φ (or of S's doing α) only if (i) *x*'s being good is something co-incident with (*κατὰ συμβεβηκός*) *x*'s being ψ, and (ii) *x*'s being ψ is a per se (*καθ' αὑτό*) cause of *y*'s being φ (or of S's doing α).

[51] Passages such as these induced Joachim (1922, 56) to contend: 'Aristotle represents all things in the Cosmos as inspired by love of God, as striving, so far as in them lies, to attain to God; i.e. to imitate in their actives that perfect and eternal life…The eternal life, which is God, radiates through the whole system'. Similar if less exalted conclusions of this sort are offered by Zeller (1923, ii 373–375), Düring (1966, 220), Balme (1962, 24), and Kahn (1985, 185).

So, for instance, a burrito's being good is a cause of Tamar's walking to the taqueria only if the burrito is also an object of desire (ὀρεκτόν) for Tamar and its being an object of desire (ὀρεκτόν) suffices for her to walk to the taqueria.

In fact, however, Aristotle rejects this way of presenting the matter. Where goodness is a cause only co-incidentally (κατὰ συμβεβηκός) when something else causes per se (καθ' ἀυτό), then goodness may easily prove to be causally irrelevant: Why did the woman give some fraction of her wages each month to charity? If she did it believing that the charitable funds would be used to alleviate hunger and she wished to alleviate hunger, then goodness, so far, plays no role in moving her to act. She may be doing it despite its being good, to placate her boss, for instance, who wants all of her subordinates to commit to donating to a favoured charity each month. If its being good merely co-incides with alleviating hunger, then its causal role is no more vouchsafed in this exchange than is the role of beauty in the curing of the unhealthy child whom a doctor happens to cure, recognizing that the child is beautiful.

We are naturally disposed to say in response that the charitable woman did not care to help alleviate hunger just on a lark or simply at random, but rather because the alleviation of hunger is (or appears to her to be) something good, and that the woman intended the charitable action in view of its goodness. This seems fair enough; then, however, when we reintroduce the causally salient feature of the object of desire (ὀρεκτόν), we point to something ineliminably normative as causally salient, namely its goodness.

Aristotle will argue that even this is insufficient. Looking at it from this perspective, we may say, in a modern idiom, that even if an appeal to a co-inciding cause is extensionally adequate as far as that goes, extensional adequacy does not, in Aristotle's view, go far enough. The inadequacy, he thinks, is twofold. First, the co-inciding causes, however extensionally adequate, fail in the first instance to cite the causally salient feature of the cause denominated, and, second, in so failing that cause may fail systematically by ignoring what Aristotle accepts as the manifest normativity in the *explanans*.

We see this sort of rejection most clearly in *Metaphysics* A 3, where Aristotle states plainly the normative dimension of the final cause, which, in this respect evidently, he regards as 'opposed' to the material cause, as 'that for the sake of which and the good' (*Met*. A 3, 983a30–31). He offers a survey of earlier approaches at the end of which he credits Hermotimus of Clazomenae as an originator and praises his fellow citizen Anaxagoras as an early proponent of the final cause. He remarks that these thinkers were responsive to the demands of the truth itself, which makes plain that neither the material elements nor lucky spontaneity could account for 'the excellent and beauty in both being and coming to be' (τοῦ γὰρ εὖ καὶ καλῶς τὰ μὲν ἔχειν τὰ δὲ γίγνεσθαι τῶν ὄντων; *Met*. A 3, 984b10). For this, he claims, reason (νοῦς) alone can be responsible.

Aristotle's eventual complaint:

> That for the sake of which actions and changes and movements take place, they call a cause in a way, but they do not call it cause in the way in which its nature is to be a cause. For some, speaking of reason nous (νοῦς) or love (φιλία), posit these causes as good; they do not speak, however, as if anything among the things that are exists or comes to be for the sake of these, but say that their motions are from these. In the same way those claiming that the one or the existent is this sort of nature claim that this is the cause of substance, but do not claim that substance either is or comes to be for the sake of this. Therefore it turns out that in a sense they both say and do not say the good is a cause; for they do not call it a cause qua good but only co-incidentally (*Met*. A 7, 988b6–16).

The crucial sentence is the last: citing the cause extensionally is insufficient.

Aristotle is looking for an account of the good as cause in a more fine-grained intensional manner:

> And the science uncovering that for the sake of which each thing must be done is the most authoritative of the sciences, and more authoritative than any ancillary science; and this is the good in each class, and generally in the whole of nature the best good. From all that has been said, then, the name being sought falls to the same science; this must be a science able to investigate the first principles and causes; for the good, i.e. that for the sake of which, is one of the causes (*Met*. i 2, 982b4–10).

This offers, then, a fairly clear picture of how Aristotle is intending to treat the good as a final cause, and thus as the kind of cause which can serve as a core of a core-dependent homonymy of goodness.

To appreciate how he proceeds, we can sketch his derivation of goodness as a final cause more abstractly. Take the general scheme:

- S does *a* in order to φ.

A first attempt is deflationary:

- S does *a* in order to φ *iff* S's doing *a* contributes to φ-ing.

So, for example, the heart pumps blood in order to oxygenate the body *iff* the heart pumps blood because pumping blood contributes to oxygenating the body.

This deflationary account fails. Suppose a ball falls accidentally partway down a drain, blocking it and thereby filling the sink. This in turn creates pressure which holds the ball in place. Yet the ball did not fall into the drain *in order* to block it.

What is needed is some introduction of normativity.[52] In fact, given his insistence on fine-grainedness, Aristotle's approach requires the importation of normatively twice over. First:

- S does *a* in order to φ *iff* S does *a* such that (i) S's doing *a* contributes to φ-ing; and (ii) φ-ing is (or appears[53]) good for S.

So, for instance, Sandra swims in order to be healthy *iff* Sandra's swimming (i) contributes to her being healthy; and (ii) being healthy is good for Sandra. Yet as Aristotle's remarks in *Metaphysics* A 3 bring out, this is as yet insufficient. Sandra might, after all, swim in order to humiliate her enemies. In this case, Sandra's swimming is good for her, because, as it happens, humiliating her enemies co-incides with a health-producing activity. So, we need another dose of normativity:

- S does *a* in order to φ *iff* S does *a* such that (i) S's doing *a* contributes to φ-ing; (ii) φ-ing is good for S (and so, norm-involving); and (iii) S does *a because* φ-ing is (or appears) good for S.

This is hyperintensional final causation—which is to say, Aristotelian teleology.

The hyperintensionality is important, because it explains how goodness serves as a core instance of non-univocal goods within or even across domains. Where goodness is a final cause, citing it *as good* is required to explain the goodness of the non-core instances. They are good because they stand in a necessary, asymmetric dependence relation on the core instance of goodness, which is the source (ἀρχή) of their goodness. More precisely, they stand in a necessary, asymmetric dependence relation on the core instance of goodness *insofar as it is good*, which is then the source (ἀρχή) of their goodness.

9.4 The Core of Goodness

On the hypothesis that Aristotle has available to him a notion of core-dependent goodness, the question naturally arises as to the nature of the core. It would be surprising if it were itself a circumscribed good.[54] Circumscribed goods are tailored for specific domains: good *for* members of kind *K*, good *insofar as*

[52] This view of Aristotelian teleology is thus intended to reject the non-normative characterization of Gotthelf (1987).

[53] At this juncture the addition of 'or appears' is required, provided that we are to understand intentional action as a species of teleological causation. See, e.g. *DA* iii 10, 433a27–30, *EN* 1112a15–b6, 1114ª31; *EE* vii 2, 1235b25.

[54] See § 1.2 on circumscribed and absolute goods.

something is a φ, good in context C_1 but not in C_2, good *as apprehended* by S, and so forth. If the core of goodness were itself circumscribed, then it would be hard to see how non-core instances—all non-core instances, whether themselves circumscribed or not—could be account-dependent upon it. For then its domain would need to be part of their accounts, in which case the generality and neutrality of the core would be threatened. It is as if one were to attempt to define the goodness of a knife, a knife which functions well, in terms of, say, the goodness of a majestic vista in the Southern Alps of New Zealand. Rather, one should expect, if anything, the account of the goodness of majestic views and of knives to depend upon some context-insensitive, kind-independent, absolute good.

To make this plain, we can make overt precisely how, in principle, a core-dependent framework for goodness would need to look. The general schema which we have introduced in agreement with Cajetanus as applied to goodness holds:[55]

> *a* and *b* are homonymously good in a core-dependent way *iff*: (i) *a* is good; (ii) *b* is good; (iii) the accounts of goodness in '*a* is good' and '*b* is good' do not completely overlap; (iv) necessarily, if *a* is the core instance of goodness, then *b*'s being good stands in one of the four-causal relations to *a*'s being good; and (v) *a*'s being good is asymmetrically responsible for *b*'s being good.

If the core instance of goodness in this schema were in one way or another constrained in terms of domain, then it would not qualify as sufficiently general or universal, not in the sense of its being univocal across all goods, of course, but in the sense of all non-core instances being equally entitled to cite it in their own essence-specifying accounts. One might adapt and deploy an observation of Aristotle's about being: if there is a prior, core good, it would be universal in this way, because it is first.[56]

There is, however, a legitimate question as to whether Aristotle so much as recognizes an absolute good.[57] As we have seen, some think that his rejection of Plato's Form of the Good is precisely the liberating insight that there is no such

[55] This general schema also renders precise our impressionistic talk of 'trickle-down' approaches to goodness in § 9.1.

[56] What he actually says: 'But if there is some changeless substance, this is prior and philosophy is the first <science>, and it would be universal in this way, because it is first; and it would belong to this science to investigate concerning being qua being, both what it is and that which belongs to it qua being' (*Met.* E 1, 1026a29–32; *εἰ δ' ἔστι τις οὐσία ἀκίνητος, αὕτη προτέρα καὶ φιλοσοφία πρώτη, καὶ καθόλου οὕτως ὅτι πρώτη· καὶ περὶ τοῦ ὄντος ᾗ ὄν ταύτης ἂν εἴη θεωρῆσαι, καὶ τί ἐστι καὶ τὰ ὑπάρχοντα ᾗ ὄν*).

[57] This question is raised most clearly and forcefully by Kraut (2011, 210–211). Contrast Steel (1999, 10): 'In any case, it seems that there are two architectonic sciences [in Aristotle] concerned with the good, ethics and metaphysics, ethics being about the «good for us», metaphysics about the «*simpliciter bonum*»'. In this, Steel agrees with Aquinas, whom he cites *ad loc.* (*Sent. Libr. Eth.* (IL 193–197).

thing as an absolute good; his advance resided precisely in his humanizing ethics by recognizing only the human good, the good for human beings.[58]

Indeed, there is some question as to what it would mean for there to be a core of goodness which was itself circumscribed in no way whatsoever. It is true that when people speak of an absolute good, as when they speak of intrinsic value, they do not all speak about the same things: some speak of an absolute good as an unimprovable good, others as the good that is most final, as what is unqualifiedly good, as a correct object of love, as the good which would remain good even in all isolation, as incorruptible, or simply as that which ought to exist.[59] Still others eschew any attempt at defining or even characterizing. So Moore: 'If I am asked "what is good?" my answer is that good is good, and that is the end of the matter. Or if I am asked "How is good to be defined?" my answer is that it cannot be defined, and that is all I have to say about it'.[60] It is not, however, clear how many of these characterizations should be taken to be definitional; nor indeed is it clear whether they should be thought to be in competition with one another.

For our purposes, however, we can stipulate, negatively and as a minimum, that a core good for Aristotle would need to be non-circumscribed.[61] Does he even allow the possibility of such a good? It seems so. For instance, in *Nicomachean Ethics* v 1, in a discussion of the unjust person, Aristotle observes: 'people ought to pray that what is good without qualification will also be good for them' (ἀλλ' εὔχεσθαι μὲν τὰ ἁπλῶς ἀγαθὰ καὶ αὑτοῖς ἀγαθὰ εἶναι, αἱρεῖσθαι δὲ τὰ αὑτοῖς ἀγαθά) (*EN* v 1, 1129b3–6). The context of this claim is nuanced,[62] but the mention of what is 'good without qualification' calls to mind Aristotle's contrast between what is good without qualification and circumscribed goods, in this case, what is good for human beings. Thus, for instance, in his discussion of friendship in *Nicomachean Ethics* viii 5, Aristotle observes:

> Friendship is most of all a friendship of good people, just as we have often said. For what is lovable and choiceworthy seems to be what is good or pleasant without qualification (τὸ ἁπλῶς ἀγαθὸν ἢ ἡδύ), and what is lovable and choiceworthy to

[58] This is the view of Jacquette (1998). See also the more scholarly remarks of Brüllmann (2011).

[59] Feldman (1998) runs through a series of characterizations, ending with an encouragement that we stop hyperventilating about intrinsic goodness. Moore hazarded a simple definition of intrinsic value (1993, 260): 'We can in fact set up the following definition: To say that a kind of value is intrinsic means merely that the question whether a thing possesses it, and in what degree it possesses it, depends solely on the intrinsic nature of the thing in question'.

[60] Moore (1993, 58).

[61] This is the primarily negative strategy of Lemos (1994, 3–4): '…according to the traditional view, intrinsic value is a *nonrelational* concept. When one says that something is intrinsically good…he means just that, that it is intrinsically good *period*. He does not mean that it is intrinsically good for me, for himself, for human beings, or for rational beings'.

[62] The nuance enters because the adverb 'without qualification' (ἁπλῶς) can be used in strict and less strict ways. One can say that health is unqualifiedly good for human beings, but then note that the return to health of a sickly crazed tyrant might be bad for human beings all the same. See *Top.* 115b3–35, 166b22.

> each person seems to be what is good or pleasant to himself; and both of these make one good person <lovable and choiceworthy> to another good person (*EN* viii 5 1157b25–28; cf. 1113a23, 1155b7; *De Caelo* i 9, 279a22–30, ii 12, 292a22–b5).

In identifying the unqualified good as an object of choice, and contrasting it with what is choiceworthy for someone, Aristotle contrasts a kind of good which is non-circumscribed, the unqualified, with another goodness which is circumscribed, the good *for someone*. What is good for someone is pursued by the one for whom it is good through action; but 'what is in the best state has no need of action (πρᾶξις) for it is itself that for the sake of which (τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα) <actions are done>' (*De Caelo* ii 12, 292b5–6). It is this unqualified sort of goodness which can serve as the core of goodness conceived as a core-dependent homonym.

9.5 Concluding Considerations

Aristotle recognizes in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 that his rejection of Platonic univocity comes with its own consequences. Once univocity is rejected, so too is easy commensurability. Indeed, given some things he himself says about the requisites of commensurability, to the effect that commensurability for any two φ things *a* and *b* requires that *a* and *b* be univocally φ, Aristotle seems to deprive himself of the sorts of ordinal rankings he requires within his normative theory and then also the sorts of hierarchies of goodness he is wont to insist upon more globally.

In *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, Aristotle offers two possible unifying strategies, but only in passing, namely analogy and core-dependent homonymy. Some have sought to show how analogy might suffice; others have supposed that he might avail himself of both strategies, even to the extreme of taking one strategy to be a special case of the other. Those approaches fail.

That leaves some version of core-dependent homonymy as his unifying principle. We should not, however, be in the least sanguine about his prospects for success. After all, even considering for the briefest moment some of his own preferred examples of core-dependent homonymy in *Metaphysics Γ* 4, we should be hard-pressed to say how Socrates' complexion is healthier than his exercise regime or, still less, how a scalpel is more or less medical than a medical textbook. Even so, one can appreciate how the framework will provide a kind of comparability for goodness, since goodness is given by Aristotle a teleological causal role: different ways of being good might yet, in their diversity, be more or less *good-augmenting*. Nor is there any reason to suppose that all good-augmenting relations are precisely the same; what is required is that their goodness stand in a final-causal relation to the good they enhance, whether that good be circumscribed or absolute.

Accordingly, since goodness can be a cause without its being the case that the goods it causes to be good are good in precisely the same way, Aristotle is entitled to speak of goodness in both domain-specific and domain-transcendent ways without being constrained to embrace Platonic univocity. He can do so, moreover, in such a way that he can deny Value Commensurability in a principled way. That thesis holds that for any value property φ, x and y are commensurable as φ only if x and y are univocally φ. Aristotle can now appeal to a relaxed principle, which allows that no value property is commensurable with any other if they are merely homonymous, or homonymous by chance (ἀπὸ τύχης)—a principle he should not abandon—even while allowing a mediated commensurability for goods which are core-dependent homonyms.

His doing so brings him closer to Plato than his criticisms of him may initially have suggested that he intended to be. Aristotle never, however, wanted to part company with Plato in thinking that goodness is a cause.

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10
Goodness qua Goodness: a Concluding Scientific Postscript?

10.1 A Science of Goodness?

If goodness is a cause and source (ἀρχή) of the goodness of good things, then goodness itself explains their goodness without its being the case that all good things are good in just the same way. As a core-dependent homonym, goodness exhibits sufficient unity to stave off a prospect Aristotle rightly eschews, namely that good things are merely equivocally good, because, as he emphasizes, good things are not homonymous by chance (ἀπὸ τύχης).

There remains a question as to whether core-dependent homonymy suffices for the sorts of commensurability Aristotle requires in his normative theory; but it seems fair to agree that he has moved a good distance towards recovering the kind of commensurability that Plato had for free, whatever the defects of this axiology may have been. If there has been a rapprochement with Plato, then, it has not been in the direction of reinstating univocity by another name; it has rather been to recover commensurability in the absence of univocity, given by the presence of core-dependent homonymy.[1]

The mechanism for recovery has, however, introduced an intriguing prospect, but it is not one of which Aristotle avails himself in our extant texts, at least not directly. This is that as there is a science of being qua being so there is—or could be, or somehow must be—a science of goodness qua goodness. In various places, Aristotle yokes goodness and being together, denying that either admits of a science (*EE* i 8, 1117b33–35), evidently on the grounds that there is no single

[1] Given the various controversies about Aristotle's philosophical development and in particular about his devolvement in philosophical theology, perhaps it should be made clear that this talk of 'rapprochement' is not intended to express agreement with either Jaeger (1948, chapters 6 and 8) or von Arnim (1931) regarding Aristotle's attitudes towards Plato's theology or to Platonism more generally. It is not to be construed as a hypothesis about the periods of his life during which Aristotle may or may not have embraced this or that Platonic doctrine. See Guthrie (1933) and (1934) regarding this set of questions. Here the term is intended doctrinally: if we have the sense that Aristotle himself recognizes that the rejection of the univocity of goodness carries with it a challenge regarding the ways in which all good things are nonetheless connected, then we should also be open, as he himself is (*EN* i 6, 1096b26–31), to the question of their kind and degree of unity in multiplicity.

genus of either.[2] Yet consistent with this denial is Aristotle's introduction of a science of being qua being (*τὸ ὂν ᾗ ὄν*; *Met. Γ* 1, 1003a21–23), which he implies is made possible by the fact, or alleged fact,[3] that, though non-univocal, being (*τὸ ὄν*) is a core-dependent homonym.[4] If it now emerges that goodness (*Met. Γ* 2, 1003a33b10) is, like being, a core-dependent homonym, then the way is paved for a parallel science of goodness qua goodness.[5]

[2] See § 5.2 on the requisites of Aristotelian science (*ἐπιστήμη*). On this topic, there remains ample reason to doubt Owen's (1960, 168) contention that the *Eudemian Ethics* i 8 contains a 'corollary that there can only be departmental sciences of being [which] runs flatly counter to the argument of *Metaphysics ΓEK*', which books, he rightly observes, commit themselves to the existence of 'a single science of being *qua* being… [which] is universal in scope and not another departmental enquiry'. The arguments of *EE* i 8 would run 'flatly counter' to the arguments of the *Metaphysics* if they denied the existence of a science of being qua being; but they do not: they deny only the existence of a science of being. The same obtains for the similar allegation of inconsistency registered by Cherniss (1962, 237–239, n. 143). The relevance of their contention to the question of the dating of the *Eudemian Ethics* is investigated in Jost (2001), a worthwhile topic but one which is orthogonal to our current concern. See Shields (2012) for a full discussion of the broader question of the relation between a science of being and a science of being qua being. In the present context, it is more important to note that in the same breath that denies a science of being Aristotle also, for the same reason, denies a science of the good.

[3] See Shields (1999, chapter 9) for doubts about this putative fact.

[4] Hardie (1980, 60–61), commenting on the fact that the science of goodness is denied in *EE* i 8 but not in *EN* i 6, suggests that the science of goodness denied would be nothing other than the science conceived, however inchoately, in Plato's *Republic*: 'The rejection of a universal science of being and of good is part of a polemic against Plato and Platonists. Thus Aristotle is to be understood as attacking Platonic conceptions of a universal science. The idea or ideal of a universal science is propounded in the *Republic*, and, in the absence of other usable evidence, it is reasonable for us to think here of that idea. It is the idea, if we may ignore all the difficulties which would arise in any attempt to make coherent sense in detail of Plato's doctrine, of a science which has the form of a deductive system based on a single 'unhypothetical' principle (510b, 511b). Within this universal system the 'hypotheses' which are the principles of the special sciences would be included as deduced propositions. If it is something of this kind which is the object of Aristotle's attack, his rejection of a universal science is consistent with the claim which he would make for the universal science which he vindicates in *Metaphysics Γ*. For the science of being qua being does not involve a denial that the principles and proofs of a special science like geometry are independent and self-justifying.' It is most unlikely, however, that Aristotle is restricting his rejection to Platonic conceptions of science. Aristotle here pairs goodness and being, and he denies the science of being in *propria persona* several times over (see Shields (1999, chapter 9) for an assessment of these denials). That said, in so speaking, Hardie implicitly opens up the prospect of there being a science of goodness qua goodness to parallel the science of being qua being introduced in *Metaphysics Γ*. On the unhypothetical in Plato and Aristotle, see the informative study of Bailey (2006).

[5] Cherniss (1944, 359–361) sees this point clearly enough: 'Nevertheless, the "primary being" to which all being *qua* being is referred is not the category of substance in the sense of the class of all physical substances… With this as its object philosophy can study being *qua* being because all beings are being in reference to this *πρῶτον ὂν καὶ πρῶτον ἕν*. Such too is the case for the term "good". Predicated in all the categories, it is a *πολλαχῶς λεγόμενον* correlative with "being"; but then the various senses of "good" should imply a "primary good" coinciding with the "primary being" and the "primary one"'. Both Alexander, commenting on *Met. Γ* 2, 1003a33 (*in Met.* 242, 5–6), and Syrianus, still more clearly when commenting on the opening of *Met. Γ* 1 (*in Met.* 56, 24–26), mark the same coupling of *being* and *goodness* with respect to the possibilities of there being corresponding sciences of both, equally grounded in core-dependent homonymy. Still, it fell to Steel (1999, 7–8) to put the question most clearly and concisely: 'But if a science of being is possible, what could prevent there from being one science of the good, even if this term is used in many senses? For is not the «good» also a term with many meanings but one focal meaning?'

It will not suffice for the existence, or possible existence, of such a science to note that Aristotle treats the first cause of the universe, the prime mover, as good. This he does in *Metaphysics* N 4, in a discussion of what he calls a great difficulty, the neglect of which is an occasion for reproach to those gliding over it all too blithely (*Met*. N 4, 1090a29–30), namely the difficulty of 'how the good and the fine stand in relation to the elements and principles' (*πῶς ἔχει πρὸς τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ καλὸν τὰ στοιχεῖα καὶ αἱ ἀρχαί*; *Met*. N 4, 1090a30–31). More precisely, the problem is 'whether we wish to say that the good itself, that is, the best good, is one of these [viz. the elements and principles], or of a later origin' (*Met*. N 4, 1090a32–33; *πότερόν ἐστί τι ἐκείνων οἷον βουλόμεθα λέγειν αὐτὸ τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ ἄριστον, ἢ οὔ, ἀλλ' ὑστερογενῆ*). He sketches two approaches. The first is that of the mythologists and older poets, who, says Aristotle, agree with some thinkers contemporary to him.[6] These thinkers implicitly regard the generation of the good as posterior to the first principles of the universe, while others, including Empedocles and Anaxagoras, identify the first principles or elements as good, Empedocles by making Love (*φιλία*) an element and Anaxagoras by introducing Reason (*νοῦς*) as a principle (*Met*. N 4, 1090a34–b11).

In response to this problem, Aristotle observes:

> This, then, is the problem: which of these two things ought one to say? It would be astounding if this very feature—being self-sufficient, that is, self-preserving—belongs to what is in a primary way eternal and most self-sufficient not in the first instance in virtue of its being good (*ὡς ἀγαθόν*). But surely it is indestructible for no other reason than that it is excellent (*εὖ ἔχει*)—and the same for its being self-sufficient. Accordingly, saying that it is reasonable that it is this sort of principle [that is, a good one] is correct (*Met*. N 4, 1091b15–20).

Aristotle goes on to deny that any of this gives us a reason to treat the prime mover as the one (*τὸ ἕν*) or as an element, or still less as an element consisting of numbers; but he nonetheless shows himself in agreement with those who think that the first principle is good, and indeed that its goodness is a grounding

[6] Aristotle evidently has both the Pythagoreans and Speusippus in view, though he does not name them here. This, though, seems to be the view ascribed to them in Met. *Λ* 7, 1072b30–34: 'Whoever supposes, as do the Pythagoreans and Speusippus, that the finest and the best are not present in the first principle, on the grounds that the first principles of both plants and animals are causes whereas the fine and the perfect are found in what comes from these, do not think correctly' (*ὅσοι δὲ ὑπολαμβάνουσιν, ὥσπερ οἱ Πυθαγόρειοι καὶ Σπεύσιππος τὸ κάλλιστον καὶ ἄριστον μὴ ἐν ἀρχῇ εἶναι, διὰ τὸ καὶ τῶν φυτῶν καὶ τῶν ζῴων τὰς ἀρχὰς αἴτια μὲν εἶναι τὸ δὲ καλὸν καὶ τέλειον ἐν τοῖς ἐκ τούτων, οὐκ ὀρθῶς οἴονται*). We have some sense of why Aristotle associates this view with Speusippus, but little sense of his grounds for associating it with the Pythagoreans. See Judson (2019, 233) and Tarán (1981). The question is also judiciously discussed by Dancy (2016), who rightly draws attention to the tenuousness of our evidence for Speusippus's views in this as in other matters. See also Merlan (1968), who investigates later evidence, primarily Iamblichus, as a source for this ascription.

attribute, one which accounts for its other traits, including its being self-sufficient and eternal.

One might be tempted to infer on this basis, then, that as there is a science of being qua being, taking as its ultimate explanatory principle the primary being, so too is there a science of goodness qua goodness, taking as its first principle the eternally existing self-sufficient being whose eternal self-sufficiency is itself already grounded in—and so explained by—its goodness. Such an inference would be at best, however, premature. We might grant that the primary being, the first principle of all beings, is good without thereby agreeing that its goodness is the source and cause of the goodness of all other good beings—even if we were to insist that the being of those beings is to be explicated in terms of the being of the first cause. For, as we have seen,[7] Aristotle has demanded not only that the first principle be good but that its goodness be the cause of good things as good. His teleological demand is in this way intensional, a circumstance which prompted him to first congratulate and then castigate Anaxagoras for identifying his first principle, Reason (*νοῦς*), both as a first principle and as good. Anaxagoras is right, Aristotle contends, to identify his first principle as something good. Unfortunately, even so, Aristotle contends, he then failed to trace the causation of the goodness of other things to the goodness of his first principle (*Met.* A 7, 988b6–16). So, if we wish to open the door to a science of goodness qua goodness, we will need to provide more than a first cause which is good, even one which is essentially good; we will need to point towards a way in which the goodness of the first cause is the core of the goodness of all good things.

10.2 The Case against a Science of Goodness

Nicomachean Ethics i 6 already contains a reason for doubting that there is, or could be, a science of goodness. There Aristotle argues explicitly that each science requires a single domain delineated by a single genus, and thus requires the presence of a single, non-disjunctive essence shared by all the members of that genus. As we have seen,[8] however, Aristotle's argument in that chapter admits of a descriptive and a modal version, each of which yields mixed results once developed.

It serves, then, to step back slightly and to reflect on Aristotle's general requisites of science; doing so helps bring into sharper relief what might be required of a science taking goodness as its core focus.

Let us begin, then, with Aristotle's plain denial of the existence of any such science—of being to the good: 'Just as being is not something single for the things

[7] This account of Aristotle's teleological conception of goodness as caused is developed and defended in § 9.3.

[8] See § 5.2 for a discussion of this argument.

mentioned [viz. the categories], neither is the good; nor is there a single science of being or of the good' (*ὥσπερ οὖν οὐδὲ τὸ ὂν ἕν τί ἐστι περὶ τὰ εἰρημένα, οὕτως οὐδὲ τὸ ἀγαθόν, οὐδὲ ἐπιστήμη ἐστὶ μία οὕτε τοῦ ὄντος οὕτε τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ*) (*EE* i 8, 1217b33–35). This denial is clearly in keeping with Aristotle's general requisites for the existence of a unified science (*ἐπιστήμη*): if goodness is non-univocal, there can be no single genus of all good things, the extension of which is set by the single, non-disjunctive essence of the good. This, then, yields a very simple argument:

(1) There is a science (*ἐπιστήμη*) of *Δ* only if there is a genus of *Δ*.
(2) There is no genus of goodness (*EE* i 8, 1217b33–35).
(3) Hence there is no science of goodness.

The first premiss is given as a ground for the denial of sciences of either being or goodness in the *Eudemian Ethics* (*EE* i 8, 1217b33–35): no genus of *Δ*, no science of *Δ*. This is fully in keeping with his normal ways of thinking about scientific unity and the requisites of demonstration (*APo.* i 2, 71b12–16, i 6, 75a18–22, i 30, 87b19–27; *Top*. 102a31–35; *Top*. i 5, 102a31–b2; *SE* 11, 172a9–15; *Gen. et Corr.* ii 9–11; *Part. An.* i 1, 639a 15–640a11; *Met. Δ* 28, 1024b4–9, *Z* 12, 1038a5–9, *Z* 16, 1039b27–1040a7).

The existence of a genus of *Δ* not only is necessary for a science of *Δ* but also makes possible a science of *Δ*. Crucially, though, Aristotle contends that the execution of the science of *Δ* will do more than describe the features of the subjects of that domain. Science identifies and displays causal priorities in the form of deductions:

> We think we understand a thing without qualification, and not in the sophistic, co-incidental way, whenever we think we know the cause in virtue of which something is—that it is the cause of that very thing—and also know that this cannot be otherwise. Clearly, science (*ἐπιστήμη*) is something of this sort. After all, both those in possession of science and those without it suppose that this is so—although only those in possession of science are actually in this condition. Hence, whatever is known without qualification cannot be otherwise (*APo.* i 2, 71b9–16).

Were there a science of goodness, then, we should expect there to be some first principle good which is the cause of all the goodness of all good things and to be such that it, goodness itself, cannot be otherwise.

> It is from them and through them [the first principles and first causes] that other things are known; but they are not known through the things under them (*Met.* i 2, 982b2–5).

To bring the point home, were there a Platonic Form of the Good, then, it could anchor such a science: it would be univocal, a first principle, invariant, necessary, and a cause of all good things. This seems to be Plato's position—and to emphasize a passage we have already encountered,[9] we look askance at those who 'used to think that beyond these many good things there is some other good, something <good> in its own right (τι καθ' αὑτὸ εἶναι), which is the cause of the goodness of all these good things' (*EN* i 4, 1095a26–28).

The prospects for a science of goodness seem altogether dim, then: there is a science of goodness only if there is a genus of goodness, but there is no such genus; there is a genus of goodness only if all good things have a single essence as good, but there is no such essence; there is a single essence of all good things only if goodness is univocal, but it is not; and, finally, there is a science of all good things only if there is a good which is good in its own right (τι καθ' αὑτὸ εἶναι), serving as a cause of the goodness of all good things, but there is no such cause.

This explains the parallel Aristotle draws in *Eudemian Ethics* i 8 between being and goodness: there is a science of the one if, and only if, there is a science of the other. It seems, then, that the fortunes of these science rise and fall together.

10.3 A Model for Goodness qua Goodness

It is worth specifying the case against the prospective science of goodness in this reasonable amount of detail, because doing so brings into sharp relief how a proposed science of goodness qua goodness would need to proceed. For whatever his reservations about a science of being, Aristotle sees his way clear to announcing and pursuing a science of being qua being in the beginning of *Metaphysics Γ*: 'There is a science (ἐπιστήμη) which studies being *qua* being (τὸ ὂν ᾗ ὄν), and the attributes belonging to it in its own right' (*Met. Γ* 1, 1003a21–22). Different scholars have adopted different attitudes towards this announcement. Some, noting that the existence of a science of being qua being is strictly consistent with the denial of any science of being, have thought this announcement does not reflect a change of mind on Aristotle's part.[10] Others have seen it as a reversal to be explained on broadly developmental grounds, and yet others have found it simply inexplicable.[11] Still, whether consistent or inconsistent, and if inconsistent, whether a reversal explained by Aristotle's development, for local purposes we

[9] See § 9.3.

[10] So e.g. Guthrie (1981, 206–207), though he leaves the matter undeveloped: 'The existence of a science of being *qua* being, or ontology, so triumphantly affirmed and reaffirmed in the *Metaphysics*, appears at first sight to be contradicted by a passage from the *Eudemian Ethics* [*scil.* 1217b33ff]…It may be significant that he says only that there is no single science of being (*to on*) not of being qua being (*to on hê(i) on*).' Code (1997) develops this suggestion to good effect.

[11] Some especially noteworthy contributions: Brentano (1862/1975), Jaeger (1923/1948), Owens (1951), Leszl (1970), Ross (1924), Aubenque (1962), and Mansion (1976).

must note that Aristotle embraces a science of being qua being, the denial, or near denial, of which is paired with his denial of a single science of goodness. The denials, in fact, come in the same clause of the same sentence (*EE* i 8, 1117b33–35).

The question thus lies near as to whether there is available to him a sibling science of goodness *qua* goodness, a science which coordinates the varieties of goodness and allows normal explanatory relations between core and non-core instances of goodness, in the way that beings which are categorially non-primary are explained by a categorially more fundamental form of being, substance (*οὐσία*), in virtue of their exhibiting metaphysical dependencies upon primary being. The interest in sketching this sort of science, if there is such a science to be sketched, is threefold. First is a question already posed implicitly: is such a science in principle possible? Second is a question of systematicity. We have already suggested that goodness construed as a core-dependent homonym represents a sort of rapprochement to Plato's austere univocity assumption for goodness. If a science (*ἐπιστήμη*) of the good is available to Aristotle in his own terms, he will be in a position to buttress his case that commensurability is available in the absence of univocity. Third is the related but distinct matter of value coordination as Aristotle understands it. One picture of Aristotle's axiology has him promoting an extreme form of value pluralism, whereby each form of goodness is locally circumscribed, to a determinate kind, often or even always a functional kind,[12] with no need or even interest in addressing the fragmentation of value as a matter of concern. If his occasional remarks about value coordination can be given some heft, then his suggestion that goodness is a cause or source (*ἀρχή*) can be vouchsafed (*Met. Λ* 10 1075a34–b2; *Rhet*. 1364a9; cf. *EN* 1002a2–4, 1095a26–28; *EE* 1218b7–11).

One way forward is to sketch the sort of science Aristotle envisages for being qua being (*τὸ ὂν ᾗ ὄν*) and then to determine whether its implicit framework provides space for an analogous science of goodness qua goodness (*τὸ ἀγαθόν ᾗ ἀγαθόν*). Because the matter of the character of Aristotle's science of being qua being is inherently controversial and permanently contested, the sketch here will perforce be partisan and partial.[13] Even so, if successful, it will provide *a* model, if not the only possible model.

[12] Aristotle on more than one occasion articulates a functional-determination thesis, according to which an individual will belong to a kind or class *F* if and only if it can perform the function of that kind or class. Hence, according to this thesis, it is both necessary and sufficient for a's being a member of kind *F*. See e.g. *Meteor*. 390a10–15; *GA* 734b24–31; *Met*. 1029b23–1030a17; *Pol*. 1253a19–25. If this thesis is accepted in its full generality, then Aristotle will be constrained to treat all kinds as functional kinds, each with its own functional good; he would not, however, be thereby constrained to treat all goods as functional goods.

[13] The sketch of a science of being qua being agrees with the treatment of Shields (2012), from which it draws. Fuller articulations and defences of the sketch offered here may be gained by consulting that work.

In the beginning of *Metaphysics Γ*, Aristotle calls attention to his apparatus of core-dependent homonymy almost immediately after introducing the science of being *qua* being. He says:

> It falls to one science to study not only things that are spoken of in virtue of one thing, but also things that are called what they are relative to one nature (*Met*. *Γ* 1, 1003b12–14; cf. *Met*. 1004a24–255).

The thought is that studying being in general implicates us in studying the nature of being, which study is best undertaken by focussing on its primary instance, namely substance (οὐσία), the primary instance of which is the unmoved mover. Hence, the primary focus of being qua being might well be this, the most exemplary being. This exemplary being Aristotle identifies as the final cause of all existence (Met. *Λ* 7, 1072b1–3). This, then, would give some content to Aristotle's brief suggestion that the prime mover is 'universal because it is first' (*Met*. *E* 1, 1026a30–31): it is the core instance of being, and because all being ultimately depends upon it, the prime mover attains a kind of universality in its primacy.[14] So, the science of being qua being, in the end, studies the primary being, as most fundamental.

It would be wrong, however, to infer from this focus of study that the science of being qua being studies the prime mover as its sole object, that its domain was limited to this one being. On the contrary, and this will be crucial for thinking about parallels with goodness, being qua being studies all of being, all beings, seeking, as in any science, to specify the causes in the domain of study.[15] When the causes of all beings are specified, they will include the core instance of being, a result which more or less tumbles out directly from the framework of core-dependent homonymy: since every non-core instance of being is such that its account asymmetrically makes reference to the account pertaining to the core

[14] Here one should be circumspect about the locution 'core instance of…' In speaking of Socrates's health as the 'core instance of health' in the case of the core-dependent homonymy of *health*, the thought is that it is Socrates's health—the quality, *being healthy*—which is the core instance rather than Socrates, the healthy human. Similarly, in speaking of the 'core instance of being' it is being itself—the quality being—which is intended, not *the being*, taken substantively, which is the bearer of that quality. As the tradition of developing and appropriating Aristotle's conception of the prime mover moves forward, there is a tendency, sometimes self-conscious and sometimes not, perhaps defensible and perhaps not, of collapsing the notion of being taken substantively and being taken formally or qualitatively. Here, we may hold these questions in abeyance, since in the current context we need only, by analogy with the case of health, think of the prime instance of being as a quality. I thank Trevor Anderson for pressing for greater clarity on this point.

[15] This is a point understood and put with clarity by Aquinas (*Comm. in Met*., prol.): 'Although this science studies the three things mentioned earlier [*scil*., first causes, maximally universal principles, and separate substances], it does not study any of them as its subject, but only being in general. For the subject of a science is the thing whose causes and attributes are studied; and it is not the very causes of the genus which are themselves under investigation. For cognition of the cause of some genus is the end which investigation in a science attains'.

instance which is its source (ἀρχή), it follows that a specification of the causes of the members in the domain of the science—all beings—will need to advert to the core instance of being.

How it serves as their source (ἀρχή) is a matter of some delicacy, but, as we have seen, we do find Aristotle specifying the prime mover as a final cause, and in that connection we also observe him teasing out its correlative goodness:

> That there is that for the sake of which (τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα) among the immobile things this distinction makes clear: that for the sake of which is <both> that *for whom* (τινί) and toward which (τινός),[16] of which the first <is moved> and the second is not. <The end> initiates motion as an object of love, and it initiates the motion of other things by those being moved. If, then, something is moved, it can be otherwise. Accordingly, if <something's> actuality is its primary local motion, then in this respect at any rate it can be other than it is, in place, but not also in substance. Since there is something which initiates motion without itself being moved, being in actuality, this can in nowise be other than it is. For local motion is primary among motions, and of this <sort of motion, local motion, the primary type> is circular motion; and this is the sort of motion that the primary mover initiates. Hence, the primary mover exists necessarily; and insofar as it exists necessarily, it exists in a fine sort of way (καλῶς), and in this way it is a principle (or source, ἀρχή). For what is necessary <is meant> in these many ways: as what is by force because contrary to impulse; as that without which the excellent (τὸ εὖ) cannot exist; and as what cannot be otherwise but is necessary without qualification.—It is on this sort of principle (or source, ἀρχή), therefore, that heaven and nature depend.

We will return to the normative character of the end introduced in this passage presently, but in laying out the model, we need to note primarily this: the principle (or source, ἀρχή) is a source as that for the sake of which (τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα), and is indeed that for the sake of which in only one of the two ways of being such, namely as that at which a process or action aims, as a benefit to be acquired, and not as a subject on whom a benefit is bestowed.

This begins to specify the way in which a science of being qua being (τὸ ὂν ᾗ ὄν) can cite a being as a cause and source of other beings. This is apposite, since as he says even at the start of his *Metaphysics*: 'It (wisdom, or first philosophy) must be a science (ἐπιστήμη) of first principles and causes (ἀρχαὶ καὶ αἴτια)' (*Met*. A 2, 982b9–10; cf. *Met*. *Γ* 1, 1003a31–2); note that source, ἀρχή, is often used also in

[16] The distinction is *cui* and *cuius*: if a doctor heals a patient, then her action is for the sake of the patient, the beneficiary (*cui*), but that at which it aims is health, the benefit (*cuius*). When the doctor is her own patient, then and only then is she the beneficiary of the benefit at which her action aims. Cf. *Phys*. ii 3,194a35; *DA* ii 4, 415b2, 20.

the sense of cause (αἴτιον: *Met*. A 3, 983a29, A 8, 990a2, Δ 1, 1013a17, E 1, 1025b4, H 1, 1042a5, Λ 1, 1069a26). In order to determine what 'being qua being' is *and* what 'the attributes belonging to it in its own right' are (*Met*. Γ 1, 1003a21–22), Aristotle specifies the features all beings have, of necessity, as beings, and not insofar as those beings are specific kinds of beings—physical, mathematical, living, non-living, natural, artefactual, and so on.[17]

What pertains to beings as beings in their own right, contends Aristotle, in summary, is just this: (i) beings are as beings logically circumscribed—they are, as beings, subject to the principle of non-contradiction; (ii) beings are as beings categorially delineated—beings occur in determinate categories; and (iii) beings are as beings modally enmeshed—all beings are either actual or potential.[18] He implies, then, that since one being is unmoved and necessarily invariant and yet in a position to cause other beings to move as an end in view of its being their benefactor, as being loved (ὡς ἐρώμενον), the good of these other beings is explicated with reference to it.[19]

[17] Aristotle's locution 'a qua b' ('a ᾗ b') has been variously understood. The best brief discussion owes to Lear (1982), whose general framework for understanding is exactly right, save for two significant though addressable missteps: 'Generalizing, one might say that Aristotle is introducing an *as*-operator, or *qua*-operator, which works as follows. Let *b* be an Aristotelian substance and let "*b qua F*" signify that *b* is being considered *as an F*. Then a property is said to be true of *b qua F* if and only if *b* is an *F* and its having that property follows of necessity from its being an *F*: $G(b \textit{ qua } F) \leftrightarrow F(b \,\&\, (F(x) \vdash G(x)))$'. This would be a mistake were Lear not to specify in a note (168, n.11) that he is using the single turnstile not in its standard syntactic sense, but stipulatively: 'I use the turnstile here to signify the relation "follows of necessity," which… Aristotle took as primitive. "X ⊢ *P* should be read "*P* follows of necessity from *X*". Thus to use the qua-operator is to place ourselves behind a veil of ignorance: we allow ourselves to know only that *b* is *F* and then determine on the basis of that knowledge alone what other properties must hold of it' (1982, 168). The missteps are, first, that the qua-operator is not restricted in its application to substances, as the locution 'being qua being' (τὸ ὂν ᾗ ὄν) already implies, since the beings (τὰ ὄντα) here need not be restricted to substances, and in fact are not restricted to substances in Aristotle's own practice (see Shields (2012)), and more importantly, second, the operator is in no way epistemic. Now, to be fair, Lear does not strictly say that it is, though his talk of 'allowing ourselves to know' may be, and too often is, taken to indicate that the operator is at root epistemic or psychologistic or linguistic. This seems, in any event, to be the purport of such easy talk as '*b*'s being regarded as *F*' or '*b*'s being considered as *F*' or '*b* under the description of *F*' or '*b* understood only as *F*' and so on (these are not Lear's descriptions, but the sort one finds continuous with his talk of placing ourselves 'behind a veil of ignorance.') It is not, however. Rather, just as Lear's more precise formulation suggests (when his stipulation regarding the single turnstile is registered), Aristotle's is a point about a necessitation obtaining prior to knowing. Lear suggests, and indeed argues for the claim that Aristotle's notion of necessity here is primitive (See Lear (1980, chapter 1).) My own preference would be to understand this as a form of non-logical, metaphysical necessity (hence, my relief when reading Lear's note about the single turnstile), which is neither more nor less primitive than any other form of metaphysical necessity, and which is in no way idiosyncratic to Aristotle. These considerations, though key, take us beyond the current context. What matters at present is that when applying Aristotle's qua-locution to something that is good, when we say for instance, '*a* qua good is *φ*', we are selecting out *a*'s goodness and focussing on precisely what follows of necessity from *a*'s being good, and we are contending that *a*'s being *φ* follows of metaphysical necessity from *a*'s being good.

[18] See Shields (2012) for an exploration of these traits.

[19] Although much of the account of teleology advanced in this chapter is at variance with Sedley (1991), in this point it agrees with him and in all points it has benefited from my studying his work.

This, then, provides in effect a response to our argument against a science of being qua being: Aristotle denies the claim that a property φ is predicated per se (*καθ' αὑτό*) and essential only if φ is (or is subordinate to) a generic property. Core-dependent homonymy suffices for science.

This presentation is intended not as a full defence of Aristotle's conception of the science of being qua being (*τὸ ὂν ᾗ ὄν*), nor even as a defence of the proposal as the best or only interpretation of his approach to that science. It is rather intended to provide a model of a science of goodness qua goodness, by providing a framework within which such a science can be articulated. One central feature of this model should be kept in view above all others: according to this proposal, the core instance of being is a cause and a source of the per se (*καθ' αὑτό*) features of all beings, as beings. Applied to goodness, we find ourselves faced with the following question: as all beings, simply insofar as they are beings, are logically circumscribed, categorically delineated, and modally enmeshed, what are all good things, simply insofar as they are good things?

10.4 The Model Applied

In justifying the application of the model to the projected science of goodness qua goodness, two observations are key. First, as we have just seen, the conception of the core instance of being, the prime mover, is already norm-importing: it causes motion such as being loved (*ὡς ἐρώμενον*), and does so in the sense of being a benefit for the beneficiaries it moves. Aristotle does not expatiate on the sort of benefit provided, but this, though worthy of speculation, need not deter us at present. The first point, again, is that the core instance of being is a source and cause as something worthy of being loved. Since it cannot be otherwise, it must also be necessarily so.

Second, when setting the conditions for the science sought in the realm of metaphysics, Aristotle is already perfectly alive both to the thought that the science sought, first philosophy, also called wisdom, is not only a science of being but a science of normatively laden being, and so equally a science of what is good:

> One choosing most of all knowledge for its own sake will choose most of all what is most of all a science. This is the sort of science which is of what is most of all knowable; but primary things and causes are most of all knowable (for it is because of these and through these that other things are known—and it is not the case that these are known through the things lying under them). But the most sovereign science, that is, the one sovereign over any subordinate science, is the one making known that on account of which each thing is to be done; but this is the good of each thing, and generally this is the best thing in every

> nature. From all the things said, then, the name <of the science> being sought <*scil.* wisdom> applies to this same science; for it is necessary that this <science, wisdom> is able to study the first sources and causes; for the good (τἀγαθόν), too, that for the sake of which (τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα), is one of the causes' (*Met.* *Γ* 2, 982a3–b10).

This final point makes explicit what is already said more figuratively in the contention that the prime mover initiates motion as an object of love: it is a final cause, and, thus, a good for each thing.

This passage neither states nor implies directly that the science of being qua being is—or is in alliance with—some other science, a science called goodness qua goodness. It does, however, draw our attention to a central feature of the objects of first philosophy, namely that the causes it identifies are in themselves good. Since, as we have already seen, the prime instance of being qua being is a cause and source of the being of other beings, and is invariant and necessarily what it is, we can appreciate that its being good is likewise a necessary and invariant feature of it. Since goodness is a cause (αἴτιον) and principle (or source, ἀρχή), and these are essentially relational notions, this goodness must be the cause and source *of* something. Here is a hypothesis: it is the cause and source of the goodness of other things, including those things which are good, but could be otherwise.[20]

One reason for thinking that these sciences cannot be the same is just that Aristotle does not think that all things that exist have a final cause: some things happen by chance and other things happen with purposeless regularity (*De Interp.* 18b7, 19a19; *APo.* i 30, 87b19; *Phys.* ii 5, 196b18–22; *Part. An.* iv 2, 676b16–677b10; *Gen. An.* 778a29–b6; *Met.* E 2, 1027a23, Z 9, 1034b4; *DA* ii 4, 415a28). In this respect, the tendency of some later Aristotelians to read into these passages a doctrine of transcendental terms, according to which predicates predicated of all beings, across all categories, are for that very reason convertible, in the sense of being necessarily coextensive, is misguided.[21]

[20] Here one may note: Aristotle is elsewhere attracted, for better or worse, to a version of the *causal synonymy thesis*, that necessarily, *x* causes *y* to be *φ* only if *x* is itself *φ* (*Gen. et Corr.* i 7, 323b33–34; *Met.* Z 7, 1032b1–12, Z 9, 1034a22–23, a26–27, *Λ* 8, 1074a4–5).

[21] Even so, the development sheds enormous light on the current discussion. For a detailed investigation, see Aertsen (2012, 545–553). Much later in the tradition, we find surprising anti-Aristotelian figures such as Bertholdus de Moosburg, Eckhart's successor as leader of the *studium generale* of the Dominicans in Cologne, developing a self-described 'agathology' intended to put on display the preeminence of Plato. Interestingly, Bertholdus finds a fellow traveller in Eustratius (on whom see § 2.3.1). It is clear that Bertholdus would have been unimpressed by the rapprochement suggested in this chapter and the last: Plato and Aristotle, he informs us, 'do not enter in concordance' on this point. See Bertholdus's commentary, *Expositio super Elementationem theologicam Procli, Expositio tituli* I (ed. Pagnoni-Sturlese/Sturlese), Preamble C, which, as Aertsen (2012, 545–546) notes, 'is the only one on the Neoplatonic thinker composed in the Middle Ages'. It is interesting, but perhaps idle, to speculate how Bertholdus would have regarded Aristotle's view had he not ascribed to him a doctrine of transcendental terms he never held (with the exception of being and unity, which at any rate

Even so, there is a point in their suggesting that goodness and being march in close step: both are transcategorial in Aristotle's view and both serve as principles and sources of the members of the individual categories which exemplify them, if in their different ways (as Aristotle would have it). In particular, if we think of good things on the model of beings, and of goodness on the model of being, we can see how a parallel science will proceed in both cases. As applied to goodness, the science modelled on being qua being treats the goodness of non-core instances of being explicated only and of necessity by appeal to the core instance of goodness, which is good invariantly and necessarily.

One can see, then, a response to an argument against such a science rejecting the demand that each science require a domain stitched together by a single essence constituting a single genus. The projected science of goodness qua goodness can no less than the science of being qua being deny the third premiss of the argument intended to block both sciences equally: it can deny, that is, (3), the claim that property φ is predicated per se ($\kappa\alpha\theta'$ $\alpha\dot{\upsilon}\tau\acute{o}$) and essential only if φ is (or is subordinate to) a generic property. Core-dependent homonymy provides the wanted rejoinder. It will follow that the conclusion, arrayed equally against both sciences, namely that there can be no science of being ($\tau\grave{o}$ $\check{o}\nu$) or goodness ($\tau\grave{o}$ $\grave{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\theta\acute{o}\nu$), remains unproven. If there can be no science of goodness, there may yet be a science of goodness qua goodness.

There being so would, however, require a specification of the per se attributes of goodness qua goodness, that is, the attributes of goodness simply insofar as it is good and not insofar as it is good for this or that purpose, or good insofar as it is an instance of something's being good as a member of kind *K*, or good for anyone, or, in short, good in any circumscribed way whatsoever.[22] If we grant that there is an absolute good, a goodness simpliciter, then one might reasonably seek to identify its per se ($\kappa\alpha\theta'$ $\alpha\dot{\upsilon}\tau\acute{o}$) attributes.

Yet this may seem an impossible task, given Aristotle's contention regarding the good itself in *Eudemian Ethics* i 8. There he winds up his campaign to identify the highest good ($\tau\grave{o}$ $\check{\alpha}\rho\iota\sigma\tau o\nu$; *EE* i 8, 1217b1) by concluding:

> Rather, good <is meant> in many ways, and there is something fine ($\kappa\alpha\lambda\acute{o}\nu$) belonging to it, and one <sort of good> is achievable in action ($\pi\rho\alpha\kappa\tau\acute{o}\nu$) and

'somehow signify the same thing' ($\tau\alpha\grave{\upsilon}\tau\grave{o}$ $\sigma\eta\mu\alpha\acute{\iota}\nu\epsilon\iota$ $\pi\omega\varsigma$ $\tau\grave{o}$ $\check{\epsilon}\nu$ $\kappa\alpha\grave{\iota}$ $\tau\grave{o}$ $\check{o}\nu$; *Met.* I 2, 1054a13–19), the ascription for which, he admits, needed to be 'collected from many passages' (*ut ex multis locis colligitur*; *Exposito* 185). For it is partly this ascription which leads him also to ascribe to Aristotle three further theses, each somehow in Bertholdus's view rendering him inferior to Plato: (i) the convertibility of the transcendental terms; (ii) the priority of being over goodness amongst the common terms; and (iii) most surprisingly, the mind-dependence of both being and goodness. Aristotle denies (iii), never affirms (i) fully, and, if the claims of this and the last chapter are cogent, cannot easily be made to affirm (ii). In any event, the impediments to Aristotle's holding to some manner of 'agathology'—to use Bertholdus's charming locution—dissipate once we see what he in fact holds regarding the relation between being and goodness.

[22] On the distinction between circumscribed and absolute goods, see § 1.2.

> another sort not. The sort of good achievable in action is that for the sake of which (*τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα*); this is not present in unchanging beings. It is clear that the good itself (*αὐτὸ τὸ ἀγαθόν*) being sought is neither the Idea of the good, nor the common <good>—for the one is unchanging and not achievable in action, while the other is changing but still not achievable in action (*οὔτε τὸ κοινόν* (*τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἀκίνητον καὶ οὐ πρακτόν, τὸ δὲ κινητὸν μὲν ἀλλ᾽ οὐ πρακτόν*) (*EE* i 8, 1218b4–9).

From this it might seem that the good itself, which would be the subject of any properties goodness as goodness might have in its own right, must be irremediably bifurcated, so that nothing could be the core of goodness as, it seems, substance (*οὐσία*) is the core of being (*τὸ ὄν*). If this is so, then it may seem that goodness as such, in its own right, has no per se (*καθ᾽ αὑτό*) features.

Any such conclusion would be unduly pre-emptory at this juncture. This is so for three reasons. The first derives from immediate context of this observation, within *Eudemian Ethics* i 8 itself. The second pertains more generally to the core-dependent character of the envisaged science. The last, and most precise, attends to a distinction between kinds of final causes neglected in this passage but emphasized elsewhere in Aristotle's corpus.

Turning first, then, to the context of this conclusion. Aristotle opens *Eudemian Ethics* i 8 by following closely upon the final remark of the previous chapter, that happiness (*εὐδαιμονία*) is the highest good, the best (*τὸ ἄριστον*) among things achievable in action by a human being (*τῶν ἀνθρώπῳ πρακτῶν ἄριστον*; *EE* i 7, 1217a40). It thus behoves us, he suggests, to investigate what this highest good might be, thus motivating, in our earlier terms, an axiological discussion by a normative concern:

> Accordingly, one must investigate what this highest good (*τὸ ἄριστον*) is, and <determine> in how many ways it is meant. This seems mainly to be <registered> in three main opinions. For they say that the good itself (*αὐτὸ τὸ ἀγαθόν*) is the best (*ἄριστον*) of all things, and that it belongs to the good itself to be both [good] in a primary way among good things and to be the cause in virtue of whose presence to them other things are good. Both of these belong to the Idea of the Good (*τῇ ἰδέᾳ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ*) (*EE* i 8, 1217b1–6).

Although he does not list the three opinions concisely, it emerges in the course of the chapter that he means the Form of the Good, the common good (*τὸ κοινόν*), and that for the sake of which (*τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα*). Aristotle rejects the first two in favour of the third, thus rendering the entire chapter, in effect, a disjunctive syllogism (as is made clear at *EE* i 8, 12818b7–12).

This shows that Aristotle is training his sights not on something's being good in its own right (*καθ᾽ αὑτό*), but rather on various candidates for the highest or

best good (τὸ ἄριστον), and determining, unsurprisingly, that this can be neither the Form of the Good, understood as Plato understands it, namely, more exactly, as Aristotle represents him, as that good whose presence to other good things makes them good,[23] nor as the common good, understood as something univocal and applied to all good things.

This last point brings us to the second reason this discussion proves no impediment to there being a science of goodness qua goodness. There being no univocal account of goodness is incompatible with the existence of a science of goodness, but not therefore inconsistent with a science of goodness qua goodness. On the contrary, adverting to our general conception of a science of being qua being, it was precisely because of the (putative) non-univocity of being that such a science was both necessary and possible: when φ is non-univocal but nonetheless exhibits a core-dependent structure, a science of φ qua φ becomes possible, provided, of course, that the delimited domain meets the remaining requisites of science.[24] On the model of being qua being, one should expect to find the per se (καθ' αὑτό) features of φ-things, only and precisely insofar as they are φ; so, if there is a science of goodness qua goodness, the task before us becomes, again, the specific (καθ' αὑτό) features of good things, only and precisely insofar as they are good.

One first clue to what these might include takes us, then, to our third and final reason for setting aside as pre-emptory the conclusion that goodness as such, in its own right, has no per se (καθ' αὑτό) features. In closing out his discussion of the highest good (τὸ ἄριστον) in *Eudemian Ethics* i 8, Aristotle first observes that 'one <sort of good> is achievable in action (πρακτόν) and another sort not', and then adds that 'the sort of good achievable in action is that for the sake of which (τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα)', which sort, he hastens to add, is not present in the domain of unchanging beings (*EE* i 8, 1218b4–6). He allows that the common good is (or would be) present in the domain of changeable beings,[25] but insists that even so, it is not achievable in action either (*EE* i 8, 1218b6–9). This leaves standing, then,

[23] Aristotle's talk of the Form of the Good as a 'cause in virtue of whose presence to them other things are good' may seem, and may be in fact, rather stilted. Even so, it brings Aristotle's language into closer contact with Plato's own idiom, on which see § 1.5.

[24] See § 5.2 for a discussion of the requisites of science.

[25] The reasoning here is a little opaque, since one might expect Aristotle simply to deny the common good exists, since it would be, then, univocal, as, for instance, animal is univocal, and so would serve as the synonymous common essence setting the domain of zoology. Perhaps, though, his reasoning might be expanded as follows: there are three candidates for the highest good, the first of which, the Form of the Good, even if it were to exist, would not be numbered among changeable beings and so would not be achievable in action (πρακτόν); the second, the common good, would, if it were to exist, be numbered among changeable things, but it does not in fact exist and so is not achievable in action (πρακτόν); hence there remains that for the sake of which, which is present in the domain of the changeable, and, unlike the other candidates, is in fact achievable in action (πρακτόν). So, this, that for the sake of which (τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα), must be the best good (τὸ ἄριστον) for human beings. This construal coheres with the compressed text that we have, but it does rely on some conjectural expansion. Another, compatible, expansion would stress Aristotle's remark at *EE* i 8, 1218a37–b3 regarding the undue generality of any common good as an objective of action.

that for the sake of which (τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα), which we may endorse as the highest good (τὸ ἄριστον).

What is striking in this argument is the convention that 'the sort of good achievable in action (πρακτόν) is that for the sake of which (τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα)', which good, says Aristotle, 'is not present in unchanging beings' (*EE* i 8, 1218b5–6). This is something he elsewhere is at pains to deny:

> That that for the sake of which is among the things which are unchanging this distinction makes clear: for [the sake of which] is (a) for something and (b) of something—and the one is moved [*scil.* (a)] and the other [*scil.* (b)] is not' (ἡ διαίρεσις δηλοῖ· ἔστι γὰρ τινὶ τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα <καὶ>τινός, ὧν τὸ μὲν ἔστι τὸ δ' οὐκ ἔστι) (*Met*. *Λ* 7, 1072b1–3; cf. *DA* ii 4, 415b20–21; *Phys* ii 2 194a33–36; *Met*. B 2, 991a21–29; *EE* viii 8, 1249b15).

This may appear to be a plain contradiction, requiring some manner of explanation, developmental or otherwise. This appearance is, however, misleading: there is no contradiction. Instead, Aristotle introduces a distinction which, he contends, explains how that for the sake of which can, understood one way, obtain among unchanging beings, which he is keen to show, because he in the same chapter (*Metaphysics Λ* 7) argues that there exists a being, the prime mover, which 'initiates motion as something beloved, while the others initiate motion as things in motion' (*Met*. *Λ* 7, 1072b3–4; κινεῖ δὴ ὡς ἐρώμενον, κινούμενα δὲ τἆλλα κινεῖ).

The distinction which licenses this introduction has been variously understood,[26] but the point, as traditionally understood, is that the expression 'that for the sake of which' (τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα) might be taken to designate the beneficiary (the end for whom, *finis cui* in the traditional Latin rendering[27]) and the good being sought (the good at which one aims, *finis cuius*). So understood, the point of its being introduced in *Metaphysics Λ* 7 is to forestall an objection to the claim that the prime mover cannot be a final cause, given that any such entity, being already fully actual, cannot be benefited at all. This 'distinction makes clear' (ἡ διαίρεσις δηλοῖ; *Met*. *Λ* 7, 1072b1) that something can be a final cause, as a *finis cuius*, without its being a final cause as a *finis cui*. In this sense, the prime mover,

[26] Judson (2019, 226) provides a perfectly defensible expression of the traditional explication of this distinction, which matches the explication given in the text, with only minor variations. Gelber (2018) offers a heterodox reading, one at variance with the entire tradition, but not one which is therefore incorrect. It is difficult, however, to square her reading with the work the distinction does in *Metaphysics Λ* 7.

[27] See e.g. Suárez, *Disputatio Metaphysica* XXIII.2. Suárez also offers a version of the often-repeated illustration of this distinction, namely that the end of the medical art is health (*finis cuius*) but also the health of some patient who is altered in the healing process (*finis cui*).

a being plainly counted among the unchanging entities, can after all be something for the sake of which (τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα) other things act.[28]

It turns out, then, that that for the sake of which (τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα) can be present among unchanging beings, contrary to what is asserted in *Eudemian Ethics* i 8, provided that the right sort of end is understood. There is, then, no threat of contradiction, on the assumption, that is, that Aristotle is restricting his discussion in that chapter to things that are achievable in action (πρακτά), as he certainly seems to be doing, and as befits a work whose overarching focus is normative.

This distinction thus removes any final impediment to there being a feature that goodness as such, in its own right, has per se (καθ' αὑτό). For Aristotle's conclusion in *Eudemian Ethics* i 8 is neither that there is no highest good (τὸ ἄριστον) nor that there can be nothing that would be good in its own right (καθ' αὑτό). It is, rather, something fully consistent with the results of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 and Aristotle's commitment to a perfectly good first cause in *Metaphysics Λ* 7 and 9. This is that the highest good achievable in action (πρακτόν) by a human being is the final cause of being human; the final cause is neither the Form of the Good nor the common good, but rather a circumscribed good, the good for human beings, which is to say the end, considered—to retrofit the distinction of *Metaphysics Λ* 7—as a *finis cui*.

Moreover, and far more importantly for our present purposes, it points the way to the first of two features that goodness as such, in its own right, insofar as it is goodness and in no other way, has per se (καθ' αὑτό). Anything which is good, simply insofar as it is good, is *telic*. In any number of contexts, Aristotle treats being an end (τέλος) as the good (τὸ ἀγαθόν) or the highest good (τὸ ἀριστόν) or, simply, the best (τὸ βέλτιστον). Typical of this close association is a discussion of the nature of deliberation (προαίρεσις) in *Eudemian Ethics* ii 10, where he says, simply, 'the end is by nature always good' (1227a18; τὸ δὲ τέλος ἐστὶ φύσει μὲν ἀεὶ ἀγαθόν). Fuller, but similar in the ease of its close association of the end and the good, is *Metaphysics* A 3, when Aristotle, somewhat abruptly, enumerates the causes:

> Since it is clear that it is necessary to acquire knowledge of the original cases (for we say that we know each thing whenever we think we have come to know its primary cause), and cause is meant in four ways. Of these we say that the substance and essence is a cause (the 'because' is revealed in the final account, and the primary 'because' is a cause and source (αἴτιον δὲ καὶ ἀρχή)); another is the

[28] Judson (2019, 226) aptly notes: 'This is not so much an argument to show that final causes (that for the sake of which) are unmoved as the removal of a possible misunderstanding', namely that something need be changeable if it can be benefited, with the result that nothing unchangeable could be a final cause. 'If something is said to be for the sake of X, X could either be the beneficiary ("*for* something"—which does, typically, change—or the goal or end (*of* something), which need not'.

> matter, that is, the substratum, is the source of motion whence, and the fourth the cause lying opposite to this, that for the sake of which, that is, the good (*τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα καὶ τἀγαθόν*), for this is the end of all generation and motion (*Met.* A 3, 993a24–32; cf. *Apo.* ii 11, 95a7, *De Somno.* 2, 455b17; *Met.* A 7, *EN* i 1, 1094a1–17, i 7, 1097a22; *EE* ii 8, 1218b18, *Rhet.* i 6, 1362a22, 1363a4–9).

Whatever is an end is good. This takes us from left to right: if *x* is an end, it is good. Does Aristotle also infer from right to left, that if *x* is good it is an end, or, at any rate, available as an end?

Although here matters become inevitably more controversial, one can make progress towards an affirmative answer by highlighting a second per se (*καθ' αὑτό*) feature of the good: in addition to being telic, the good is, simply as good, *magnetic*.[29] This is to say that the good is, in the first instance, an object of desire (*ὀρεκτόν*)—for beings, that is, capable of desire. It is also to say, by design, that the allure of the good plays a causal role in the life-direction of *all* living beings, including not only humans and various non-human animals, but also plants, though they are capable of desire in at best an extended sense, and then finally also even to non-living entities for whom speaking of desire is so attenuated as to be pointless if not merely metonymic. (By 'merely metonymic', I mean, for instance, in the sense of 'wants' in which 'The piano wants tuning' or Trollope's 'It wants only five minutes for dinner'[30] or 'desires' in Spenser's 'A doleful case desires a doleful song'.[31]) On Aristotle's account, the causal efficacy of the good extends to all these cases, in differing ways, such that, again, the good is magnetic and so, in the broadest sense, worthy of desire.

This is the force of what we might term Aristotle's *easy realism* about the good. In *Metaphysics Λ* he states directly, evidently feeling the least need to justify, a core point about the direction of desire and the good:

> The primary objects of thinking and of desire are the same. For what appears fine is the object of appetite and what is fine is the primary object of wish; and we desire something because it seems fine rather than its being the case that it seems fine because we desire it. (*Met. Λ* 7, 1072a27–30; cf. *DA* iii 10, 433a21–30; *EN* iii, 4, 1113a15–22, vi 2, 1139a31–36)

[29] One can hear a kind of Platonic echo of this term in the writing of Iris Murdoch, who reports, in *The Sovereignty of the Good*: 'The image of the Good as a transcendent, magnetic centre seems to me the least corruptible and most realistic picture for us to use in our reflections upon the moral life' (1970, 73). The resonance is welcome, though one should not infer on this basis that Aristotle is, after all, a Platonist about the Good. He is not; but it does not follow that their views will be utterly disjoint from one another. See Setiya (2013) on the contours of Murdoch's conception of the Good.

[30] Anthony Trollope, *The Belton Estate* I. vi.

[31] Edmund Spenser, *Teares of Muses,* in *Complaints*, 541.

Recalling the almost universal interchangeability in Aristotle of the good (*τὸ ἀγαθόν*) and the fine (*τὸ καλόν*) in Aristotle's diction,[32] we here see Aristotle insisting on a simple realist claim about the good: we desire something because it is good, and not the other way around; what is good is not made good by its being desired. The priority here plainly resides with the good, and not with desire; the good activates desire, and desire does not bestow goodness. The good draws. It is in this sense already magnetic.

Still, we may take the matter into greater detail, merely setting Aristotle's easy realism as a background assumption. Starting with one central case first, the much maligned and misunderstood remark with which Aristotle opens the *Nicomachean Ethics*:

> Every craft and every inquiry, and similarly every action and decision, seems to seek some good; accordingly, [some] have rightly declared the good is that at which all things aim (*EN* i 1, 1094a1–3; cf. i 2, 1094a18–22).

The misunderstanding results in the ascription of a simple fallacy to Aristotle, one involving a coarse quantifier swap,[33] inferring from the premiss that every action aims at something to the conclusion that there is something—some one thing—at which all actions aim.[34] In fact, though, he is merely observing that the good-directedness of all action provides an explanation of why so many have declared that the good is sought by all.[35]

In the current context, of special concern is the connection here offered between something's being good and its being an end of action. People rightly

[32] Typical examples of their apparent near synonymy: *Met Z*.6.1013a22, *N*.4.1091a30. He does distinguish the two terms at *Met*. M 3, 1078a30–32, where he notes that in some cases we are prepared to call items in the domain of the immobile fine (*καλόν*) but not good (*ἀγαθόν*). Elsewhere, in *EE* i 8, he notes that good (*ἀγαθόν*) is meant in more than one way, the first of which pertains to the fine (*καλόν*), which he contrasts with the good which can be achieved in action (*τὸ πρακτόν*), emphasizing that the second is limited to objects at which we can aim, whereas the first, the notion of good as fine (*καλόν*), resides in the realm of the immobile, where the fine (and so, in this sense, good), in the order there exhibited, which is not something we can achieve (1218b3–6).

[33] That is, inferring: $((\forall x)(\exists y)\,Ryx \rightarrow (\exists y)(\forall x)\,Ryx)$.

[34] Anscombe (1957, 34) is typical: 'In fact there appears to be an illicit transition in Aristotle, from "all chains must stop somewhere" to "there is somewhere where all chains must stop" '. Ackrill (1974, 68) puts the point succinctly: 'It is commonly supposed that Aristotle is guilty of…the fallacy of arguing that since every purposive activity aims at some end desired for itself there must be some end desired for itself at which every purposive activity aims…' Vranas (2004) collects and discusses much of the literature on this question.

[35] Aristotle's connecting conjunction 'accordingly' (or 'wherefore' or 'on which account'; *διό*) usually indicates a ground for someone's reaching a position—his own but also, as here, someone else's—without offering those grounds as a deductive argument in his brief for that position (cf. *EE* ii 12, 1226b7; *Pol*. i 12, 1259b12, 1260b4). Compare: 'Everyone expects the market to fall further before it rebounds; accordingly, many have reasonably found it prudent to save rather than spend'. The speaker might or might not intend to endorse prudence in the current economic climate, but even if so it does not follow that she has offered an argument from market expectations to the conclusion that prudence is warranted in the marketplace.

(καλῶς) regard something as good, or as the good, because it is an end of intentional action. This implies that if something is good, or is the good, it is suited to be an end, and not accidentally, but because of its own nature. This would then provide grounds for the inference from right to left, that is, if *x* is good it is an end, or, at any rate, available as an end.

To be clear, if this is correct, we should not understand Aristotle to be *defining* the good as an end or the end as a good, either at the outset of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, as Suárez suggests,[36] or indeed more generally; he rather offers them as coextensive, and evidently necessarily so.[37] Indeed, Aristotle never offers a definition of the good, or even gives any indication that he thinks that the good is definable. On the contrary, the entire thrust of *Nichomachean Ethics* i 6 is that the good is not definable—if, that is, a definition is an essence-specifying account which captures and puts on display the univocal, non-disjunctive nature of the *definiendum*. For he denies that goodness is univocal. Even so, this is perfectly consistent with its having per se (καθ' αὑτό) attributes simply in virtue of what it is.

In the most central sense of the term, the good has, as good, the per se (καθ' αὑτό) attribute of being an object of desire. In this sense, it is magnetic.[38] More controversially, the magnetic is also good as an object of desire in a more attenuated sense, a sense available to animals without desire, if there are any, and plants, none of which can be said to have a faculty of desire (*DA* ii 3, 414a29–b1). Yet he is prepared to say:

> This [the nutritive capacity] is both the first and most common capacity of the soul, in virtue of which living belongs to all living things, a capacity whose functions are generating and making use of nutrition. For the most natural among the functions belonging to living things, at least those which are complete and

[36] Suárez DM 10.19: 'Aristotle favours this view [*scil.* "good has the *ratio* of an end"—see next note], when he defines the good as that which all things desire, in I *Ethic.* c. 1' (*favet Arist., I Ethic., c. 1, definiens bonum esse quod omnia appetunt)*. Later in the same section, however, Suárez himself comes to adopt the view of Cardinal Cajetanus (*Comm. to Thom. ST* I q.5, a.5), and in agreement with Aquinas (*In lib. X etc. ad Nic.* I, Lec. I), that Aristotle's contention must be understood a posteriori, because '"desirable" formally expresses something that "good" as such does not express, by reason of which this causal proposition is true: "A thing is desirable because it is good]"'. Following Cardinal Cajetanus, he contends that desirability is posterior to goodness in the way that visibility is posterior to being illuminated and coloured, such that 'A thing is visible because it is illuminated and colored'—and not coloured or illuminated because it is visible.

[37] Cf. Aquinas *SCG* i 38. 4: 'The good has the *ratio* of an end' (*bonum autem rationem finis habet*). See also *ST* i q. 5. a. 4 *resp* and Suárez *DM* x i. 21.

[38] One should take care here not to overstress this descriptor. It is meant in roughly the sense in which the diffusive character of the good is meant in Aquinas (*ST* I q. 5 art. 2), when he criticizes Dionysius (*Div. Nom.* iv) for supposing that we are to understand by the phrase 'the good is self-diffusive' (*bonum est diffusivum sui esse*) that the good is an efficient cause. Instead, 'it must be said that the good is called self-diffusive in the manner in which an end is said to move' (*dicendum quod bonum dicitur diffusivum sui esse, eo modo quo finis dicitur movere*; *ST* I q. 5 ad 2). Although there is a question as to the relation between final and efficient causality in this debate, calling the good magnetic in the current discussion is not intended to impart efficient causality to it, and certainly not to impart end-independent efficient causality to it.

> neither deformed nor spontaneously generated, is this: to make another such as itself, an animal an animal and a plant a plant, so that it may, insofar as it is able, partake of the everlasting and the divine. For that is what all things desire (*πάντα γὰρ ἐκείνου ὀρέγεται*), and for the sake of that everything, do whatever they do in accordance with nature. ('That for the sake of which' is meant in two ways: that on account of which and that for which.) Since, then, these things are incapable of sharing in the everlasting and the divine by existing continuously (because among perishable things nothing can remain the same and one in number), each has a share insofar as it is able to partake in this, some more and some less, and remains not itself but such as it is, not one in number but one in form (*DA* ii 5, 415a24–b7; cf. *Gen An.* ii 1, 731b18–7321a12).

Because Aristotle here references all beings with nutritive souls, he means to include plants in this formulation, as he emphasizes when mentioning them overtly. Evidently, then, the sense of 'desire' at play here is extended or relaxed, though not therefore unconnected to its core applications to humans and other animals.[39]

Aristotle's manner of speaking of desire in this connection is neither troublesome nor even unusual. It reflects an important point, however, about the per se (*καθ' αὑτό*) attributes of the good: in saying that the good is magnetic, and meaning by that inter alia that the good is an object of desire (*ὀρεκτόν*), it turns out that we are not predicating something univocal of the good insofar as it is good. This in turn is reflected in its extension, but not in such a way as to render that domain unfit for science. If we think that there are per se (*καθ' αὑτό*) attributes of the good that are themselves instances of core-dependent homonymy, then we can further appreciate why there could be no simple science of goodness, even while affirming that there might yet be a science ranging over the core-dependent domain, just as there is in the case of being.

The magnetism of the good is in this respect like its telicity. This is seen most clearly by reflecting on a passage in *Eudemian Ethics* i 8, namely 1218a16–1218b7, a passage which lacks a clear parallel in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6. In this passage, Aristotle lodges a methodological complaint against his opponents, one which eventually gives way to several more substantive concerns. The methodological consideration pertains to the tendency of the Platonists (not so named) to begin

[39] Perhaps there is no a deeply substantive disagreement here, but Judson (2019, 336) seems to overstate the case when contending that the 'appeals to desire here… cannot be meant literally' and that 'the ascription to animals and plants of desires to partake in the everlasting and the divine is a figure of speech…' One possible source of disagreement is that Judson connects desire with awareness in a way that Aristotle does not, or at least does not overtly: 'Aristotle appears to ascribe to animals and plants a desire for, and hence awareness of, the everlasting and divine—the heavenly bodies or the unmoved mover(s)'. If every extended sense is non-literal, then there is no disagreement; but this sets a high bar for the literal. The difference bears mentioning all the same, since the lack of univocity of desire is reflected in Aristotle's own use of 'desire' (*ὀρέγω*).

their inquiry into goodness not by focussing on goods agreed by all, like health, strength, and moderation, but rather on more recherché-sounding goods, like numbers and units. Declaring the numbers to be good on the grounds that 'the good itself is the one' (*τὸ εἶναι τὸ ἓν αὐτὸ τἀγαθόν*; *EE* i 8, 1218a20),[40] they proceed to identify health and justice with structures and numbers, and on that basis provide top-down demonstrations that justice is good and health is good and so forth. Aristotle recommends they proceed the other way around, by starting with the agreed goods and then pushing upwards towards the conclusions that numbers and structure are good, even better than the agreed goods, he urges, because of their being stable (*ἠρεμία*) and unchanging (*ἀκίνητον*) things (*EE* i 8, 1218a22–25).

Aristotle then proceeds to criticize their governing principle in all this, namely that the good is itself the One:

> Their demonstration that the Good Itself is the One, on the grounds that [the One is that at which] numbers aim, is reckless. For it is not said clearly *how* they strive, but instead they simply assert this without due qualification. Plus, how could anyone suppose that desire (*ὄρεξις*) is present in things lacking life? They ought to busy themselves with this <question> and not think it fit <to maintain> without argument things difficult to credit even with the benefit of argument. And to claim that all beings aim at some one good is not true; for each desires its own peculiar good—an eye seeing, a body health, and so other things other goods (*EE* i 8, 1218a24–30).

There are various noteworthy claims in this striking passage, but of special interest in the current context is that the Platonists are here represented as offering a demonstration, a reckless (*παράβολος*) demonstration, that the Good Itself is the One, namely that all numbers strive for unity, a claim which Aristotle contends further implicates them in the thought that numbers have desire—the sort of contention it is hard to credit even in the face of a compelling argument, let alone on the basis of a bald assertion. After all, numbers are not living beings.

Despite his clear reservations, Aristotle does not simply rule out of court those who suggest that lifeless things might be regarded as having desires. On the contrary, he chastises those who say this only for asserting this contention baldly, without bothering to offer an argument, leaving open, then, the possibility that one might offer some manner of argument after all, however unlikely that may seem in advance. Again, this is not a contradiction, and not really perverse,

[40] This text accepts Fritzsche's proposed emendation. Otherwise, 'that the good is one', or 'is a unity' (reading *τὸ εἶναι τὸ ἓν αὐτὸ ἀγαθόν*, as preferred by Rowe). The question perhaps looms large for Platonic doxography, but in the present context either text suits: the point is that the Platonists ground the goodness of the Form of the Good in its being a unity, which principle they in turn use to deduce the derived goods as posterior. Cf. *Met*. A 8, 980a18–32.

so long as 'desire' is here being understood in a relaxed or metonymic sense—and it is clear that Aristotle speaks of 'desire' (ὄρεξις) as required for 'aiming' at something in this connection.

In this relaxed sense—not as relaxed or extended as it would presumably need to be in the case of numbers—Aristotle proceeds to make an observation especially pertinent to our current reflections on the character of a prospective science of goodness qua goodness: we should not think that there is some one good at which all things aim, since each thing has its own peculiar (or unique, or proprietary, ἰδίον) good. He then provides as examples the good which sight desires (ὀρέγεται), namely seeing, the good which the body desires, health, and thence generalizes to other things each with its own proprietary good as its object of desire. Already here, we are in an extended zone, where eyes and bodies have desires, desires directed at goods appropriate to the kinds of things they are.

It may seem odd to find Aristotle denying that there is some one good at which all things aim, if we have seen in the opening remarks of the *Nicomachean Ethics* that there is some 'good at which everyone aims' (*EN* i 1, 1094a1–3; cf. i 2, 1094a18–22). Yet we have not seen quite that: Aristotle is not guilty, as he is often claimed to be, of a quantifier-swap fallacy (that is, of inferring that as everything aims at something, there is something, some one thing, at which all things aim).[41] Still, even allowing that, one might suppose that if, after goods can be sub- and superordinated to one another, one can aim at both a proximate and a remote good at once, with the result that one can indeed aim at a remote good *by* aiming at a proximate proprietary good. As, then, one might aim at happiness by aiming at health, so one might aim at a larger, comprehensive good by aiming at its sundry constituents. If so, this would colour the way in which Aristotle's remark that all beings aim at some one good is not true; for 'each desires its own peculiar good' (*EE* i 8, 1218a31–32) might yet, in principle, be consistent with each also aiming at a common good, depending, of course, on the relations between the peculiar good of each thing and any possible further good those peculiar goods might constitute or, or generally, serve to procure. The point is not that it is false to say 'that all beings aim at some one good' *tout court*, but that it is false to say that all things desire the same good proximately, or directly, or in the absence of a good characteristic of the kind of thing it is. The difference is consequential because the denial of a single ultimate good ordering as a first principle subordinate goods is incompatible with both a science of goodness and a science of goodness qua goodness. By contrast, a denial of a single good which all things desire *only as* mediated by proximate desires for their own proprietary goods, which goods are made good by their relation to a more final good not said univocally of them all, is, if incompatible with a science of goodness, not at all incompatible

[41] See n. 34 above.

with the existence of a science of goodness qua goodness. Here the science of goodness qua goodness marches in step with the science of being qua being.

Finally, then, one can see the most attenuated sense of desirability and telicity promulgated most strikingly in *Metaphysics Λ* 10. Aristotle opens this chapter by asking why the cosmos as a whole is good:

> One must also consider in which way the nature of the whole <universe> possesses the good—that is, the best <good>, whether it is something separated and <exists> itself in its own right, or is the arrangement <of the whole universe>. Or is it in both ways, as in an army? For its excellence <consists> in its order and <also in the general>—indeed <it is> more this one <than the order>; for he does not exist because of the order, but instead the order exists because of him (*οὐ γὰρ οὗτος διὰ τὴν τάξιν ἀλλ' ἐκείνη διὰ τοῦτόν ἐστιν.*) (*Met. Λ* 10, 1075a11–15).

His question is not whether the cosmos as a whole is good, but *how* it is good, *in which way* it is good. He asks instead whether the goodness of the cosmos is due to (i) something separated and <existing> itself in its own right (*αὐτὸ καθ' αὑτό*); or rather (ii) its arrangement or order (*τάξις*). We are immediately advised, however, that this disjunction may be taken inclusively, and perhaps mildly nudged in the direction of thinking that it in fact *should* be taken inclusively, with the proviso that if we do so, we might nevertheless give priority to one good over the other in our final determination.

The question is elicited in the form of two analogies, each in its own way illustrating a way of taking the disjunction inclusively while privileging one disjunct over the other. The first we have met already, namely the sort of good an army (*στράτευμα*) manifests, a good found both in its order (*τάξις*) even while we recognize its general (*στρατηγός*) as its good.[42] The second analogy focusses upon the good we find in a household:

> And all things are somehow coordinated, but not in a similar way. [All things]—fishes, birds, and plants—are coordinated, but not similarly: they are not such that they bear no relation to one another. On the contrary, there is some relation [obtaining between them]. For all things are coordinated in relation to one thing—as in a household, where the free persons are least at liberty to act as chance allows, but all or most [of their actions] are ordered, while the slaves and beasts are able to do little for the common [good], while much of what they do is

[42] The text of *Met. Λ* 10, 1075a14 is modestly ill-coordinated. Judson (2019, 39) captures its structure well: 'Or is it both ways, like an army? For its being well is in the arrangement and is the general, and especially him'. Periphrastically, Aristotle is asking: 'Should we say that the good of the cosmos resides in its order, or should we rather identify its good as something separate, existing in its own right? Or should we say it is both, and, if so, is it both in such a way that one depends for its goodness upon the other?'

> as chance allows; for the nature of each of them is such a principle (ἀρχή). I mean, for example, that it is necessary for all things to come to be dispersed, and there are thus other things which they all have in common with a view to the whole (*Met*. Λ 10, 1075a16–25).

Although some features of this passage remain obscure,[43] and others disputed,[44] its basic purport is clear enough. This is that different elements in a household contribute to a common end in different ways and in differing degrees. Their variegated functions are absorbed more or less into the end of the household consequent upon their rank in a hierarchy: free persons are dedicated almost completely, beasts and slaves, like the material elements corralled to contribute to a designed artefact, and much of what they contribute 'is as chance allows', which is to say not in virtue of their own natures but insofar as their natures permit them to contribute under the direction of their superiors. The beasts of burden do contribute to the end of the household, but not by engaging in deliberation about how best to achieve the common good.

To overlay this analogy with the clearer analogy of the army, an answer to the question posed in the chapter, namely how it is that the cosmos is good, comes into focus. The good of the universe resides in its order as derived from a single end which is its good. From this it may not be inferred that the good of each contributor is precisely the same; rather, the goods of various interacting components are complementary, exhibiting a general order in their structure as contributing to an overarching good. This contribution in complementarity is not, however, a benefit to the unifying good. Again, Aristotle opens the door to telicity in this connection by distinguishing ways of being an end: 'That there is that for the sake of which (τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα) among the immobile things this distinction makes

[43] One point of obscurity pertains to the claim that 'it is necessary for all things to come to be dispersed', which, though offered as an illustration, seems inapposite at best. Sedley (2000, 232) suggests that it may be a reference to the activity of the elements (cf. *Met*. Θ 8, 1050b22–30, *Gen. et Corr*. ii 10, 336b34–337a7). Ross (1924 vol. II, 402) more plausibly conjectures: '"All things, even if they make no other contributions to the whole must, at least come to be dissolved", *sc*. so that better things may be made out of their elements'. Ps.-Alexander (*Comm. in Aris. Met.* Λ, 716), partly in agreement with Sedley, supposes that Aristotle has in view the eventual dissolution of 'all generable things', such that there is a cyclical contribution of elements and compounds to the whole universe, each coming to be generated reciprocally one from the other in succession (cf. *Gen. et Corr.* ii 10, 336b27–34).

[44] See Judson (2019, 348–350) for a discussion of some alternative approaches. Judson (2019, 349) observes: 'The household analogy is not straightforward…I take its aim to be to illustrate the twin ideas that all things are connected to each other by being related to the Prime Mover, and that this relation has a different charter for different things. It is plausible that those who are free, on the one hand, and the slaves and beasts on the other, are analogues of the heavenly bodies and (some or all) sublunary beings respectively…; what is less clear is what the contrast between them is meant to be'. Judson agrees with Sedley (2000, 232) that the contrast cannot be meant to highlight the extent to which they contribute to the common good. This is partly correct, since the main contrast seems to be between the different ways in which they contribute to some common end, where these ways are likely to result in greater or lesser contributions.

clear: that for the sake of which is <both> that *for whom* (τινί) and *towards which* (τινός)' (*Met. Λ* 7, 1072b1–3).

The analogies further make clear that Aristotle thinks—rightly—that he can have both telicity and magnetism without supposing that the proximate good of each kind of thing must be the same: desires and ends come in various forms, reflecting a variegation of goodness which yet derives from a single source. This dependency is precisely the sort required for a science of goodness qua goodness: one good whose goodness is aetiologically responsible for the forms of goodness dependent upon it, without any requirement for a univocally delineated domain of all good things. The rejection of univocity does undermine a science of goodness, and thus threatens a kind of value pluralism Aristotle is keen to eschew. Consistent with the failure of univocity, however, is core-dependent homonymy, which permits a science of goodness qua goodness, and with it a form of commensurability hearkening ever back to the core instance of goodness, the principle and source (ἀρχή) of all good things.

Aristotle ends *Metaphysics Λ* 10, and the whole of *Metaphysics Λ*, quoting Homer,[45] and thereby contrasting his single principle of goodness with those posited by his opponents who suppose that the principles are many, variegated, and uncoordinated:

> And those who say that the mathematical number is first and that thus there is always another successive substance and that there are different principles for each [substance], make the substance of the universe episodic (for one substance contributes nothing to the other by existing or not existing) and they posit many principles. But the things that exist do not wish to be governed badly. 'The sovereignty of many is not good; there is one sovereign' (*Met. Λ* 10, 1075b37–1076a4).

This does not represent a final rapprochement with Plato and Platonism. It does, however, show, again, that both agree that there is one final cause of goodness.[46]

[45] Homer, *Iliad* ii 203–205.

[46] Suárez comments (*in Locis* xv–xvi): 'This is the position which Aristotle intends to assert in this chapter, which he also wants to be the conclusion of the whole work and a kind of peroration worthy of so great a philosopher. But he demonstrates it with an argument as follows. The good of the universe consists in the appropriate order of its parts, in such a way that this good is a kind of intrinsic good which inheres in the universe itself. But it cannot have a good of this kind unless there is in it someone supreme who is its Governor, who is at the same time outside it and its ultimate end, from whom it emanates and to whom it tends as the extrinsic good of the universe. Therefore, one supreme Prince and Governor is necessary in the universe.' Basically Suárez treats the chapter as offering a simple syllogism, the minor premiss of which emerges only at its end: (i) The good of the universe consists in the appropriate order of its parts (its τάξις); (ii) the universe manifests this form of goodness only if there is, extrinsic to the universe, a supreme governor as its ultimate end; (iii) therefore, there is a supreme governor as the extrinsic end of the universe. Probably this overemphasizes the end of the chapter, even if it is not incorrect in its final conclusion. The chapter is better thought of as

Readers of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* should not be surprised about this eventual form of agreement. Already in its first book Aristotle contends:

> And the science uncovering that for the sake of which each thing must be done is the most authoritative of the sciences, and more authoritative than any ancillary science; and this is the good in each class, and generally in the whole of nature the best good. From all that has been said, then, the name being sought falls to the same science; this must be a science able to investigate the first principles and causes; for the good, i.e. that for the sake of which, is one of the causes (*καὶ γὰρ τἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα ἓν τῶν αἰτίων ἐστίν*) (*Met.* A 2, 982b4–10).

Just as Aristotle thinks that the science of being qua being must be *sought* and not merely engaged, so too the science of goodness qua goodness requires special pleading. Perhaps some special pleas may, after all, meet with satisfaction.

10.5 Systematicity and Value Coordination Reconsidered

The possibility of there being a science of goodness qua goodness shows how being and goodness march in step in Aristotle: there is a genus of neither and so likewise a science of neither. Still, as there is a science of being qua being, so too can there be a science of goodness qua goodness. At any rate, the framework of core-dependent homonymy which licenses the one renders possible the existence of the other.

Still, if there is no in-principle impediment to there being a science of goodness qua goodness, neither does that constitute any special reason to embrace one. Here, however, we should return to our original impetus for entertaining such a prospect: a rejection of univocity carries with it a threat of ungovernable pluralism consequent upon a goodness so fractured that even intracategorial commensurability recedes.

Now, one would not require a science of goodness qua goodness to stave off intracategorial incommensurability. This is because the apparatus of core-dependent homonymy allows for commensurability across sub-ranges of a predicate without demanding complete coordination. To illustrate, perhaps '…is organic' affords on instance of core-dependent homonymy across a range of natural farming techniques and another, discrete instance of core-dependent homonymy across a range of living bodies and organs, even in the absence of any further coordination between the two families of predicates. So, in principle, the predicate

dedicated not to proving the *existence* of a single sovereign but rather to an examination of the principle and source of the good of the cosmos. That the cosmos is good is assumed already in its opening lines.

'…is good' might admit of a variety of discrete families of core-dependent homonyms, perhaps one even in each of the categories, or, perhaps less fine-grainedly across a range of functional goods, a range of moral goods, a range of political goods, and so forth. If so, then perhaps that is all the value commensurability we should need or want.

Even so, one might legitimately wonder whether Aristotle himself would be satisfied with that sort of value fragmentation; by the same token, one might wonder whether he would be constrained to accept that much, simply in virtue of his anti-Platonic polemic.

The answer to the second concern turns partly on the question of the possibility of a science of goodness qua goodness, which we have already settled, and then also on the question of whether that avowedly possible science could deliver commensurability across value domains. That, then, is the remaining task before us.

As for the first concern, whether Aristotle himself would be satisfied with a high degree of value pluralism: it seems not. At any rate, one observes in Aristotle a strong tendency to resist the kinds of value fragmentation his rejection of univocity might be thought to beget. Three passages, two very brief, tell in this direction. The first is his expression of worry in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 that we have already encountered and discussed.[47] Having denied univocity, Aristotle quite appropriately poses a question for himself, and in so doing shows himself to be plainly uncomfortable with the prospect of there being no systematic connection between good things, even if they do not receive the predicate '…is good' univocally: 'How, then, is goodness spoken of? For it does not seem akin to those things which are homonymous by chance' (*EN* i 6, 1096b26–27). He then dismisses the question as pertaining to a more exact sort of discussion: 'But presumably one should leave these matters aside for now; for speaking accurately concerning them belongs more appropriately to another [branch] of philosophy' (*EN* i 6, 1096b30–31). We do not possess these more accurate discussions in his extant corpus. This is unfortunate, since Aristotle is right: this would be a good discussion to have, and to have more accurately in the appropriate branch of philosophy. Since the issue is axiological, the suitable branch seems to be metaphysics.

Second, there is the casual sort of remark we find for instance in the *Rhetoric* i 7, which sets out to treat, for rhetorical purposes, the topics of relative use and relative value. As Aristotle notes in that discussion, often enough two people agree that two things are useful, but then disagree about which of the two is more useful. He accordingly recommends that 'one must speak concerning <what makes one good thing> the better good and <what makes one useful thing> more

[47] See § 7.3 for a discussion of this expression of concern.

useful' (*Rhet.* i 7, 1363b6–7; *λεκτέον περὶ τοῦ μείζονος ἀγαθοῦ καὶ τοῦ μᾶλλον συμφέροντος*). He observes in this connection:

> Since we call the good both what is itself desirable for its own sake and not for the sake of another, and that for which all things strive, and what someone would choose if they had acquired understanding (*νοῦς*) and practical wisdom (*φρόνησις*), and also that which is productive or preservative <of the good>, or the sorts of things which attend upon it, while the end is that for the sake of which other things <are>, and we call the good *for* someone what has been done in respect of these things relative to oneself… (*Rhet.* i 7, 1963b12–18, accepting Kassel's seclusion).

Here Aristotle again seems to mention an absolute good contrasted with a circumscribed good, to indicate his normal apparatus of core-dependent homonymy, and to do so in the service of determining how various good things are to be ranked relative to one another, how to determine, that is, which of two goods is 'more good' (or 'the better good'; *μείζονος ἀγαθοῦ*).

In the context of making this sort of determination, Aristotle offers a perfectly general observation regarding the ordinal ranking of goods, one which seems utterly domain-insensitive:

> And what is <good> in its own right is more choiceworthy than what is not <good> in its own right, for instance, strength is better than what is wholesome, since <what is wholesome> is chosen not on account of itself while the other <strength> is; and is just what it is to be good (*ὅπερ ἦν ὸ ἀγαθόν*).[48] And should something be an end, it <is better than> what is not an end, for the one is chosen for the sake of another, and the other for the sake of itself, for instance exercise is chosen on account of bodily well-being. And what stands less in need than another of other things <is better>, for it is more self-sufficient (*αὐταρκέστερον*). What stands less in need is that which needs additionally fewer or more easily attained things. And whenever this (A) cannot be without that (B), or cannot come into being without that (B), whereas that (B) <can be or come into being> without this (A), then the one not needing anything (B) is more self-sufficient, so that it appears to be the better good (*μείζονος ἀγαθοῦ*). So too should something be a source (*ἀρχή*) or a cause (*αἴτιον*), while something else is not a source

[48] One must proceed cautiously with talk of definitions and accounts in the current context, but the Revised Oxford Translation is not unduly tendentious: '…and this was our definition of the good.' At any rate, the locution Aristotle uses here (*ὅπερ*) is a phrase he uses in connection with highlighting the essence, and in some cases the genus, though that is not applicable here. It is one of his ways of saying 'a φ something, precisely as φ', so e.g. 'a human being, precisely as a human being, is…', or, in the case of a genus, 'a φ, precisely as a ψ, is…', so e.g. a human being precisely as an animal. See *APo.* i 22, 83a7; *Top.* vi 4; 141b35, *Met.* iv 4, 1006b13, vii 4, 1030a3–5.

> or a cause, <it will be the better good> because of the same reason [*scil.* that it is more self-sufficient]; for without a cause or source, nothing can exist or come into existence (*Rhet.* i 7, 1363b38–1364a13).

Here Aristotle articulates a principle of independence, which is cast in causal and source-dependent terms. What is causal is more independent than what it causes, and what is a source is more independent than that of which it is a source; and what is more independent is more self-sufficient (αὐταρκέστερον); and, finally, what is more self-sufficient is the better good (μείζονος ἀγαθοῦ).

One might try to pigeonhole these principles, making them domain-dependent or circumscribed in some way. That is not, however, the way Aristotle expresses them.

Let this suffice for now, then, on the question of how Aristotle himself would wish to regard any extreme degree of value pluralism. This leaves, then, our second concern, whether Aristotle is constrained by his own anti-Platonic polemic, whether he welcomes it or not, to embrace only domain-circumscribed commensurability.

If we have already vouchsafed the possibility of such a science, the question remains as to whether it would be fit for purpose. This question is, in the end, effectively just this: would a science of goodness qua goodness provide a domain-independent notion of goodness, with an absolute, domain-indifferent good at its core, such that it affords a principle of commensurability in the absence of univocity?

We may hazard one such principle, developed from the sorts of remarks Aristotle offers in *Rhetoric* i 7. Suppose, then, that we have a core-dependent analysis of goodness. To recall,[49] the fourth and fifth clauses of this account hold: (iv) necessarily, if *a* is the core instance of goodness, then *b*'s being good stands in one of the four-causal relations to *a*'s being good; and (v) *a*'s being good is asymmetrically responsible for *b*'s being good. We now see how this can be generalized, when grafted into a prospective science of goodness qua goodness, so as to yield some content for the *principle of degree of dependence* proposed earlier.

On the hypothesis of such a science, proceeding in the manner of being qua being as rendered legitimate by a core-dependent homonym in lieu of a univocal genus of goodness, we note that all non-core instances of goodness depend upon the non-circumscribed core of goodness along the axis of one or more of the four causal dependence relations, each of which will involve in this connection a form of account-dependence. Given that what is more self-sufficient (αὐταρκέστερον) is more good, or the better good, or simply, better (μείζονος ἀγαθοῦ), one can offer a fully general principle of commensurability across all instances of goodness:

[49] See § 9. 4 for the introduction of this account.

Principle of Degree of Dependence: where *a* and *b* are non-core instances of goodness, then: (i) *a* is better than *b* if *a* is more self-sufficient in the degree of its account-dependence than *b* is; (ii) *b* is better than *a* if *b* is more self-sufficient in the degree of its account-dependence than *a* is; and (iii) if neither *a* nor *b* is more or less self-sufficient in its degree of account-dependence than the other, then *a* and *b* are equally good.

Degree of account-dependence is given in the manner specified in *Rhetoric* i 7, namely causally and in terms of source-dependence, both of which are asymmetric in the manner required for account-dependence in every instance of core-dependent homonymy.

To illustrate with a case perhaps favourable to Aristotle's way of thinking: is it better now to exercise or to practise the viola? Both are good activities, because both are productive of things which are good in their own right, namely health and beauty. Health and beauty in turn are good, because they too stand in an account-dependent relation to goodness itself. If either activity is more or less self-sufficient than the other, than it will be better, and so more choiceworthy. We should not expect such rankings to be fixed and static, however, since degree of dependence can itself be context-sensitive and categorially delimited. That much, however, is true of Plato's propinquity metric as well: in context c_1 exercise may be closer to the Form of the Good than is practice, even though the opposite obtains in context c_2.

There might be in either approach formidable epistemic impediments to producing secure ordinal rankings. To the extent that this is so, Aristotle's animadversions against the practical utility of the Form of the Good as a normative principle might equally apply here as well. Still, the question at the moment is whether, in a more exact setting, one might in principle find oneself in a position to make reflectively rational rankings. If so, then Aristotle will be justified in maintaining, as he does, that 'whether one is to do this or that is already the work of reasoning—and it is necessary that measuring take place by one measure; for one pursues the best' (*DA* iii 11, 434a7–9).

Even if equally beset with epistemic impediments to their implementability, the two axiologies now in view are not equal in their degree of complexity. Whatever its normative utility, Plato's propinquity metric is simple—some, including Aristotle, might say unduly so. By contrast, the principle of derivation-dependence afforded by the proposed science of goodness qua goodness, given as it is in terms of core-dependent homonymy, is formidably complex. One might accordingly have a simplifying impulse to favour Plato's approach. Here, though, we must step lightly. Whether simplicity tells in favour of one axiology or the other is not a matter of theoretical expedience: the value structure in which we find ourselves enmeshed is either simple or it is not, and that is a matter to be

decided not by miserly appeals to parsimony: this question turns rather on the value structure of the universe itself.

10.6 Concluding Considerations

One will look in vain for that Aristotelian treatise which opens with the heralded announcement: 'There is a science (ἐπιστήμη) which studies goodness qua goodness (τὸ ἀγαθὸν ᾗ ἀγαθόν), and the attributes belonging to it in its own right' (*Περὶ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ A* 1, 1463a1–3). This is a pity, since we might have expected one. At any rate, given Aristotle's passing comment amidst his axiological investigations of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 to the effect that such a discussion requires the greater exactitude to be found in a discipline other than ethics (*EN* i 6, 1096b30–31; cf. *EN* i 3, 1094b13, i 7, 1098a27, i 12, 1102a25, ii 2, 1103b34–a7, v 4, 1131b1, ix 2, 1164b27), we might hope to find one articulated in a science (ἐπιστήμη) offering the sort of precision required (*APo*. i 2, 71b9–72a14).

Such exactitude befits axiology, not normative theory. One cannot infer on that basis, however, that axiological investigations would be, because exact, permanently barred from having normative import. In the present context we have been wondering whether in general one can expect rational deliberation to offer preferences reflecting value ordinality given independently of value-generating desires. Both Plato and Aristotle suppose that one can at least in principle arrive at such rationally governed preferences, and this despite their deep differences on the question of the univocity of goodness.

One instruction to take away from their similarity in the midst of this difference: it is wrong to infer value pluralism from a denial of the univocity of goodness, at least not without any intervening steps. We are not entitled to infer from the non-univocity of the good the sorts of value pluralism enshrined in claims to the effect that all good things bear at most a family resemblance to one another. On the contrary, there is a structured *tertium quid* between the extremes of a pure Platonic univocity and a chaotic value pluralism, namely core-dependent homonymy. If the value structure reflected in the core-dependent homonymy of the good extends across all domains of goodness, and across all circumscribed goods of all kinds, then there is after all subject matter for a science of goodness qua goodness: it will study all good things just insofar as they are good.

The science of goodness qua goodness, like any other science, seeks to articulate the causes and sources of the principal features exhibited by the members of its domain: it seeks to explain the goodness of all good things not in terms of the human good or some artefactual or functional good, or by specifying a kind-relative good, or, indeed, by appeal to any form of circumscribed goodness at all. This science, rather, seeks to explain all these forms of goodness by appeal to

goodness itself, to what is good in its own right: it seeks, that is, to explain the goodness of all good things just insofar as they are good, and this, finally, is the activity of the science of goodness qua goodness, leading inexorably back, just as Aristotle says, to that being which 'exists of necessity, therefore, and, in so far as it exists necessarily, exists finely, and is in this way a source' (ἐξ ἀνάνκης ἄρα ἐστὶν ὄν· καὶ ᾗ ἀνάγη, καλῶς, καὶ οὕτως ἀρχή; *Met.* Λ 7, 1072b10–11).[50]

Fractured Goodness: Aristotle's Response to Plato's Form of the Good. Christopher Shields, Oxford University Press.
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[50] This sentence is discussed in detail in Shields (2024).

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Index

Absolute vs. Circumscribed Goodness 2 n. 3, 19–22, 39–40, 63, 109, 175, 177, 183, 188, 203, 218, 222–226, 257, 259
  Types of Circumscribed Goodness 20–21
Ackrill, John 92 n. 3, 93 n. 6, 96 n. 12, 127 n. 19, 246 n. 34
Aersten, Jan 47 n. 10, 239 n. 21
Alexander of Aphrodisias 8, 45 n. 5, 47 n. 7, 82 n. 16, 103–106, 122, 122 n. 5, 122 n. 6, 183, 229 n. 5
Analogy 33, 50, 58–59, 206, 210–214, 226
Anaxagoras 221, 230–231
Annas, Julia 86 n. 25, 86 n. 26, 122 n. 5, 181 n 12
Anscombe, Elizabeth 246 n. 34
Aquinas, Thomas 46, 54–60, 206–207, 235 n. 15, 247 n. 37, n. 38
Aspasius 45 n. 5, 47 n. 7, 47 n. 8, 49, 55
Austin, J. L. 79 n. 11
Axiology xix, 23–25, 118, 137, 167, 208, 234
  Axiological vs. normative value considerations 23, 24 n. 54, 38, 43, 176, 196, 259

Bailey, Dominic 229 n. 4
Barney, Rachel 29 n. 65, 175 n. 2, n. 3, 193 n. 35
Beautiful, *see* Fine
Being
  Meant in many ways 35, 91, 113–117
  Not a genus 115
Bertholdus of Moosburg 239 n. 21
Bodnar, István 205 n. 23
Bonitz, Hermann 140 n. 2, 142 n. 7, 143 n. 8
Brentano, Franz 144 n. 12
Brüllmann, Philipp 21 n. 49, 22 n. 52, 225 n. 58
Burnyeat, Myles 186 n. 25, 214 n. 40
Butler, Travis 94 n. 8

Cajetanus 218 n. 49, 224, 247 n. 36
Capellen, Herman 112 n. 41, 148 n. 16
Causal synonymy thesis: *see* Synonymy
Cause:
  Of goodness 26, 77, 152, 190, 193, 217–218, 220, 231–233, 253
  Goodness as 190, 217–223, 227, 239
Chang, Ruth 198 n. 6, n. 7, 209 n. 30
Charles, David 180 n. 10, 181 n. 13
Cherniss, Harold 13 n. 35, 16, n. 40, 154 n. 23, 211 n. 33, 229 n. 2, 229 n. 5
Chisholm, Roderick 144 n. 12
Choiceworthy (*αἱρετόν*) 191, 192, 194, 203, 207, 256
Circumscribed goods: *see* Absolute vs. circumscribed goods
Coleridge Samuel 42–43, 66
Co-incidence 30, 59, 144–145, 220–221
Commensurability 28, 170–171, 198
  And ordinality 198, 198 n. 6, 258
  Of the Good (CG) 196, 202–203
  Strong and weak 198 n. 8
  Value Commensurability (VC) 196, 201–202
Common (*κοινόν*) 8, 10, 16, 77
Complete (*τέλειον*) 153, 204
Context invariance 51, 51 n. 22, 149, 153, 182, 193
Context-sensitive 158, 258
Cooper, John 195 n. 3
Core-dependent homonymy: *see* Homonymy

Dancy, Russel 230 n. 6
Definition xvii, 6–8, 53, 83, 90 n. 1, 149, 155, 161
  Essence-specifying xvii, 7, 102, 155, 174, 197, 216, 224, 247
  Non-disjunctive 6, 7 n. 18, 83, 231, 247
Demonstration 77, 121, 249
Differentia 82, 115–116, 128–130
Digression 26, 47 n. 7, 54, 176

Empty metaphor xv, 149, 157, 165, 183
Eristic xviii, xix
Essence-specifying: *see* Definition
Eternal 31, 52, 82 n. 16, 147, 149–150, 152–153, 154 n 20, 185 n. 23, 231
  Vs. sempiternal 154
Eudaimonia 17–18, 198, 203, 207, 218
Eustratius 10 n. 31, 45 n. 5, 46–53, 56, 60, 64–65, 67, 88, 118 n. 2, 132 n. 25, 154–157, 190, 211 n. 33, 239 n. 21

Feldman, Fred 144 n. 12, 225 n. 59
Fine, beautiful (*καλόν*) 99, 166, 240, 245
  Coupled with good (*ἀγαθόν*) 230, 246, 246 n. 32
Fine, Gail 76 n. 7, 122 n. 5, 122 n. 7, 123 n. 11, 124 n. 12, 143 n. 10, 183 n. 20
Flashar, Hellmut 28 n. 60, 66 n. 57, 67 n. 59
Forms, Aristotelian
  Immanent xvi
Forms, Platonic xv
  Aristotle's Criticisms of xv, xvi
  As paradigms xv, 5, 11–12
  Separate (*χωριστόν*) 8, 12, 13 n. 34, 14, 16
Frege, Gottlob 83 n. 17, 87

Gadamer, Hans-Georg 61–62
Galileo 180 n. 11
Geach, Peter 20 n. 46, 73–74, 107–112, 173
Gelber, Jessica 243 n. 26
Gerson, Lloyd 179 n. 9
Giocarnis, Kimon 47 n. 10, 154 n. 20, 211 n. 33
Grant, Alexander 61, 118 n. 1
Grosseteste, Roger 45 n. 5, 47 n. 10, 54

Hardie, W. F. R. 4 n. 12, 79 n. 11, 93 n. 5, 95 n. 11, 229 n. 4
Hesse, Mary 212 n. 36
Hollow talk 183, 185, 192
Homonymy xxii, 45 n. 5, 99, 101, 155–156, 227
  By chance 32, 58, 210, 215, 227–228
  Core-dependent xxii, 161 n. 6, 161–162, 210, 211 n. 33, 214–216, 218, 223–228, 234–235, 238, 241, 253–254, 256–257, 259
  Of being 35, 38, 90–91
  Of the good 7 n. 20, 35, 65, 100, 103, 106, 216, 224

Imitation 26 n. 59, 143, 149
Intrisicality filter 144–154, 160
Intrinsic goods 156, 158, 161, 253 n. 46
Irwin, Terence 94 n. 7, 94 n. 9

Jacquette, Dale 62–63
Jaeger, Werner 228 n. 1
Joachim, Harold 29 n. 65, 93 n. 5, 132 n. 25, 220 n. 51
Judson, Lindsay 230 n. 6, 243 n. 26, 244 n. 28, 248 n. 39, 251 n. 42, 252 n. 44

Kant, Immanuel 144 n. 12
Keyt, David 6 n. 16, 84 n. 19
Konstan, David 47 n. 7, 49 n. 15
Kosman, Aryeh 103 n. 27, 104 n. 29
Kotwick, Miriam 129 n. 20
Kraut, Richard 18 n. 42, 20 n. 46, 22 n. 50, 224 n. 57

Lear, Jonathan 237 n. 17
Lepore, Earnie 112 n. 41, 148 n. 16
Lonfat, Joël 211 n. 34
Lloyd, A. C. 77, 87 n. 28

MacDonald, Scott 97 n. 14
Malink, Marko 71 n. 2
Maurice, Frederick 43 n. 1
Meant in many ways 7 n. 20, 35, 65, 162, 174, 214
  Meant in two ways 159–160, 162
Menn, Stephen 218 n. 48
Meno 8
Merlan, Philip 230 n. 6
Metonymic 245–246
Michael of Ephesus 45 n. 5, 47 n. 9
Mirus, Christopher 210 n. 32
Moerbeke, William 57
Mohr, Michael 86 n. 25
Monotonicity: *see* Univocity
Moore, G. E. 90 n. 1, 144 n. 12
Multivocity 102
  Value Multivocity (VM) 196, 199–201
Murdoch, Iris 245 n. 29

Natorp, Paul 122 n 8, 124 n. 12
Numbers 16, 22, 30, 49–51, 69–70, 79, 83 n. 17, 132, 149, 230, 249–250
  Ideal 82, 85–86, 86 n. 25, 86 n. 26

Oates, Whitney 24 n. 54, 28 n. 62, 44 n. 2
Objective vs. Subjective 19 n. 43, 21
Oddie, Graham 19 n. 43, 23 n. 53, 199 n. 11
Ordinality: *see* Commensurability
Owen, G. E. L. 229 n. 2
Owens, Joseph 211 n. 34

Paradigm xv, 2, 11–12, 16, 24, 26, 37, 39, 50–51, 52 n. 23, 123 n. 11, 123–126, 143, 146–155, 157, 174, 176–182
  Aristotle's brief against 182–192
Participation 149, 165
Penner, Terry 122 n. 8
Per se (*καθ' αὑτό*) 37, 128, 220, 238, 240, 242, 244–245, 247–248
Peramatzis, Michail 71 n 2
Phaedo 9
Pigden, Charles 108 n. 32, 110 n. 39, 112 n. 41
Pointlessness 162–163, 163 n. 8, 165, 175
Price, Anthony 167 n. 10

Primavesi, Oliver 122 n. 4
Principle of Degree of Dependence 257–258
Priority 14 n. 38, 54, 69, 239 n. 21, 246
  And posteriority 50, 70, 78, 81, 86 n. 25, 87–88
  In nature 71, 71 n. 2
  In substance 71 n. 3, 71–72
Pritchard, H. A. 96 n. 12
Propinquity metric 60, 195, 258
Ps.-Alexander 9, 252 n. 43

Rapp, Christof 45 n. 4, 213 n. 37
Relatives 72–73
Robinson, Richard 212 n. 35
Ross, W. D. 9 n. 25, 13 n. 36, 85 n. 22, 122 n. 4, 141 n. 4, 185 n. 23, 202 n. 18, 252 n. 43

Santas, Gerasimos 4 n. 11, 5 n. 13, 64–65, 88 n. 31, 88 n. 32, 91 n. 2, 104 n. 30, 153 n. 17, 161 n. 5, 190 n. 32
Scalarity 171, 190
Science:
  Core-dependent homonymy suffices for 238
  Practice of 177
  Requisites of 119, 231–233
  Single domain required 118–119, 127
Scotus, Duns 7 n. 18
Sedley, David 206, 237 n. 19, 252 n. 43, n. 44
Sellars, Wilfred 184
Separation 39, 54, 56, 141, 143, 143 n. 10
Series 72, 75–80
Setiya, Kieran 245 n. 29
Smith, Robin 100 n. 17, 100 n. 18
Socrates 55
Spenser, Edmund 245
Speusippus 62, 66 n. 57, 230 n. 6
Steel, Carlos 47 n. 10, 48 n. 12, 224 n. 57, 229 n. 5
Stewart, John Alexander 61, 66 n. 57
Strachey, Edward 43 n. 1
Suárez, Francisco 10 n. 30, 243 n. 27, 247, 253 n. 46
Subjective: *see* Objective vs. Subjective
Synonymy 102, 201, 202 n. 18, 246 n. 32
  Casual synonymy thesis 66 n. 57, 239 n. 20
Syrianus 229 n. 5

Taylor, A. E. 81 n. 13
Teleology 181, 205 n. 21, 219–223, 237 n. 19, 251
Thomson, Judith 112 n. 41
Transcendental terms 116
Trollope, Anthony 245

Universal 9, 16
Univocity xvii, 6, 7 n 18, 16, 102, 126, 167, 172
  And monotonicity 171 n. 18
  And scalarity 171–172
  Intra-categorial non-univocity 130–137, 139, 168, 254
  Tests for non-univocity 169–170

Ward, Julie 216 n. 43
Wardy, Robert 202 n. 18
Wedgwood, Ralph 167 n. 10
Wilson, Cook 12, 80, 96 n. 12
Woods, Michael 94 n. 9, 101 n. 19, 109 n. 36, 114 n. 46

Xenocrates 66 n. 57

Zingano, Marco 129 n. 21